THE HALL OF HELLINGSLEY;

A Tale.

BY SIR S. E. BRYDGES, BART.
&c. &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE

HALL OF HELLINGSLEY.

CHAP. I.

SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE BERKELEY. —HUE AND CRY AFTER HER.—VAIN CONJECTURES AS TO WHAT HAD BEFALLEN HER.

Huntley was at length to set off from the vicarage to pay a visit to Wolstenholme. His duty and gratitude required it; and his anxiety about the health of Sir Ambrose Grey, made it necessary for the relief of his suspense.

His health was yet so delicate, that he had resolved not to fatigue himself by too long a ride. He fixed, therefore, to sleep at a small inn on the road, about

the distance of half the way. During the whole of the first day's journey he felt the greatest heaviness of heart, which had ever oppressed him, without being able to account for it. He could not throw it off: the more he struggled, the more sad he became.

When he retired to bed at the inn, he could not sleep. If he closed his eyes, horrible visions surrounded him. He rose early to pursue his journey: before mid-day he came in sight of the Castle of Wolstenholme. The tumult of his feelings then overcame him. He alighted from his horse, and sat upon a bank. A mist came before him: he turned his eyes dimly on the pinnacles of the chapel, which, rising higher than the castle-battlements, was more conspicuous: he said to himself, "Thou wast the scene of what had nearly been the most dreadful of all my misfortunes. I am too ill to encounter thee. I cannot visit thee now."

He turned his horse's head; feebly mounted him, and commenced his return towards Cheeveley. He reached, with difficulty, the inn where he had slept the preceding night; and was two days confined to his bed there, by the agitations which his fever had brought on. The third he rose, and got safe back to Cheeveley.

The next morning, a female servant, who came to call him, showed, by an officious sort of gossiping, that she had something, which she was anxious but afraid to tell. At length she broke the silence.

"Have you heard the sad news, Sir?"

"No: what do you mean?"

"O Sir! Madam Alice Berkeley! Madam Alice Berkeley is lost, Sir; and there is an hue and cry all over the country."

"Lost! God of heaven! is it possible? How lost?"

"She walked out, Sir; a morning or two ago; and has not since been heard of!"

This was such a blow to the heart of Huntley, that it stunned him. He rose; but remained for some time in a perfect stupor. At length he ventured to ask intelligence of the vicar. He could learn nothing satisfactory. The vicar confessed that Mr. Barney had been to him about it; and he owned that Huntley's return to the vicarage had been a great satisfaction to him; for he could not deny that some suspicion had fallen on him from the circumstance of his departure from Cheeveley on the day on which this dreadful loss had occurred.

"In truth," cried the vicar, "scandal said she had eloped with you."

"*Eloped! eloped!*" exclaimed Huntley, in a transport of agony, "Alice Berkeley eloped! Accursed, foul-mouthed talk; that spares not angelic purity itself. Some accident has befallen her.

Some imp of hell has assailed her. I will traverse the earth and the seas to discover and rescue her. I will tear open the gates of the infernal regions to free her."

He raved, he tore his hair, and then he sunk in an exhausted agony on the floor.

Mr. and Mrs. Barney sunk into almost helpless sorrow at this singular and terrifying event. It was useless to impart it to her father; he was too far sunk into the impotence of age. The whole district was roused: a thousand absurd reports were propagated; and every day some new clue was pretended to be discovered. Accounts of secret murder were spread; and, among the rest, the bands of gypsies came in for more than their share of suspicion.

Sim, the gypsy, was particularly marked out as one, of whom many circumstances spoke ill. Some of the villagers positively affirmed, that he had been seen

that morning in the neighbourhood of the rectory; and he had, since, entirely disappeared. Others said, that they had seen Alice alone in one of the paths of her accustomed walk, very near the spot where *Sim* wa reported to have been seen; and then some children, who were attending their cows in one of the lanes not far distant, protested they had heard the most dreadful femàle shriek about the very same time.

Warrants were now issued against Sim, and high rewards offered. But the constables declared beforehand it was all in vain. Never, they said, had they been able, on any occasion, to approach him. They believed him to be a devil, not an human being. He was a Probeus, who took all shapes. He never wanted money; and he had been reported even to bribe high if he seemed to be pressed hard. They said that they suspected that he begged, rather from whim, than because he cared for what he got. He had

often an assembly of gypsy girls about him, whom he seemed to have entirely at his command, and was profligate and licentious beyond example.

Kate, the gypsy, who had so often been seen in Sim's company, was now also sought for; but in vain. The last time she had been observed was at Mr. Scudamore's door, when Alice was visiting there.

The alarm of this affair spread through the whole county. It even reached the court; and there was a consultation whether a proclamation against the offender or offenders should not be published. But there had been instances of so many violences in the remote provinces, which the power of the court could not control, and in which there was a suspicion that families of great power were implicated, that it was deemed inexpedient to expose the weakness of government in cases where the chance of success was doubtful.

Sir Oliver Berkeley's own influence was now almost extinct; but most of the other branches of this great family took up this affair as a common cause; and most of the other noble houses thought it an insult, which ought, if possible, to be avenged, by way of signal example.

The castle of Wolstenholme received the appalling intelligence with the most generous indignation. Giles Grey took the opportunity to declare, that this was the time to show how much they could sympathise with the house of Hardingville, and to endeavour to put an end to feuds and prejudices so disgraceful to both families. Margaret Grey behaved with a noble abandonment of a jealousy, so natural in her case, and joined sincerely in her brother's wishes.

Hal of the Hall was consulted by some of the servants of Hardingville; but he could give no clue to this dark affair. He was asked for a description of Brown Bess: it agreed with that of Kate; but

nothing in her conversation with him could be twisted at all to implicate her in this dreadful incident: on the contrary, she seemed a warm well-wisher to Alice.

Three other gypsy women, one of them old, the others young, were taken up, and carried before a neighbouring magistrate. They confessed that they knew Sim, and had sometimes been in his company; and they said that he was a wild one; a daring one, who would stick at nothing to accomplish his pleasures, or whatever object he had in view. They said that he was considered by all the rest of the tribe as one having powers and privileges of his own; that all of them stood in awe of him, except *Kate*, who would not yield to him; and, at times, could manage him; but at other times vainly attempted to restrain him. That the men were jealous of him on account of their wives and daughters; but were held in such terror by him,

that they dared not resent their wrongs. "These girls can witness it, if they will," said the old woman. The girls smiled with unabashed audacity. "Sim is a fine handsome fellow," they cried, "and has a rare taste for a pretty face himself."

Great enquiries were made after Mr. Browne. When he left Mr. Scudamore's, he said he was going home to his own seat in another county. Messengers were sent thither to ascertain whether he had arrived there, and whether he was still there. The servants had neither seen nor heard of him for many months. A friend was applied to: he could give no information of him; but he shook his head.

The person, who waited on this friend, (if friend he might be called,) was a man of great sense, great address, and great knowledge of the world. He entered with the most anxious zeal into this business. He proceeded cautiously to sift

the character of Browne. "I myself," said his friend, "know less of him than you suppose me to know. He is very plausible, and has most extraordinary talents; but I will own to you, that I have great doubts of his principles. His first passion is women; for which he would sacrifice any thing. It matters not their rank; high or low; beauty is his object. And I confess, with a good deal of disgust, that he has been too successful. It is dreadful; but I have not been able to avoid entertaining the opinion, that the profligacy of men towards the sex does not at all deter new victims. I have observed the most modest girls, or those who had the name of being most modest, delighted with his notice, when I cannot doubt that they were fully assured of his dissolute character.

"His history, if it could be told, would abound with extraordinary incidents. He is of a noble family, and of a rich branch of it; but was born a

younger brother. He early spent his little portion at the court, and then embarked as an adventurer in naval and military expeditions. Perhaps it was here that he imbibed all those free and daring principles, which set him at liberty to follow wherever his passions led him. He came home; and, by the death of his elder brother, inherited the family estate.

"He contracted, in his youthful expeditions, a love of frolicsome adventure, and a habit of employing himself in occupations which require violent impulse. He loves hair-breadth escapes, and the danger which is crowned by success. He cares not for tame schemes, which are attended by no difficulties; it is the exertion and the hazard which gives them a zest. He has carried off many a man's wife; then gloried in the defiance of his unequalled courage and bodily prowess.

"I have not known Alice Berkeley;

but I understand that she has an high character for virtue and amiableness. Yet, Sir, as you know the world well, you know that women are frail: and I assure you, that few have been able to withstand the artillery of Browne. Is it not possible that, however wicked, he has persuaded her to elope with him?"

"Quite impossible!" answered the other vehemently. "It is possible that he may have carried her off by force or stratagem; certainly not with her consent."

"I cannot deny that *that* also is not improbable," replied he.

The daily reports, which were brought to those who took upon themselves to conduct the search after Alice, were most afflicting. Sometimes it was supposed, that she had been murdered; sometimes, that she had been sacrificed to the brutalities of bands of gypsies or robbers. Some reported, that they had seen her ghost; some, that they heard

her voice crying from the woods or caves; others, that she had been seen forced into a boat in the Bristol channel, and carried off to sea.

There were some who seemed willing to swear, that they had seen her in the midst of a group of gypsy girls, with her face stained; weeping, and apparently imploring; but mocked and scolded.

Wherever there was a lone house, some one thought she heard her voice lamenting from the windows. The inhabitants of the village of Hellingsley protested that they plainly heard her shrieks of a night as if coming from the old rookery, on the right of *The Hall.* They pretended that they observed a more than usual bustle in the Hall, and passing of lights along the windows, than there had lately been.

Indeed, the *Hall of Hellingsley* had for some time appeared nearly deserted. The villagers had noticed that the ghosts

had been less busy there, and that they had been less disturbed by night-noises, and the clatter of horsemen, and the bay of dogs.

Sir Ambrose Grey seemed to have nearly taken up his entire abode at Wolstenholme, and the retinue were greatly diminished; but when they left Sir Ambrose's service, no one ever heard of them any more. It was always said that Sir Ambrose, by his interest, had provided for them in other parts of the country.

CHAP. II.

HUNTLEY'S DISTRACTION. — GENERAL SUSPENSE AND ANXIETY. — SUSAN CONSULTS GILES GREY.

WHATEVER was felt by others for the loss of Alice, the torments of Huntley exceeded them tenfold. It was sometimes raving; sometimes dumb unutterable grief:

"'Twas sad by fits; by starts 'twas wild."

He could not reason: conjecture was distraction. Even jealousy, in spite of him, would sometimes intermix itself.

It seems that Alice had not been returned from Hardingville to the Rectory above two or three days, when this afflicting event took place. She had gone out after breakfast, in her usual manner; and

the servants said, that every thing looked in her own apartment after a common walk. Her books, and papers, and writing-case, were lying about on her table; all her drawers were open; and a letter, just begun, apparently addressed to Susan Pembury, giving an account of her safe arrival at the Rectory, was left carelessly near the ink-stand. There was no flutter of manner as she went out of the house, for she spoke to the maid when she quitted the door. Indeed, the maid remarked that she had not seen her so calm a long while.

A rustic had come twice, the day before, to know if she was returned. But this excited no observation, as so many were relieved by her bounty, and looked anxiously therefore for her presence at the Rectory.

It was the general opinion of the house, that she had been taken away by force, by *Sim*, the gypsy. Sim had been more than once at the door during her absence

at Hardingville, and had been seen under his tent, in some of the neighbouring lanes, boiling his kettle, in the company of some of his raven-locked female companions.

Huntley rode distracted about the country, enquiring in every direction, and vowing revenge to Browne, to whom he attributed the unexampled crime of this inexpressible wickedness. In every quarter he called him publicly a villain and a skulking coward; and challenged him to come forward, and prove himself an honourable man. Browne heard not, or pretended not to hear. No Browne came forward to accept the challenge, though loudly pronounced in every corner of the county; and even far beyond the province.

No language can describe the grief of Susan Pembury. The horrors to which she imagined that Alice was subjected, were much increased by a dream, which she had the night before the unhappy

day on which Alice disappeared, and by other mysterious circumstances, which had occurred since. Three different persons; a middle-aged man, an old woman, and a young woman, all apparently disguised, and of a somewhat better rank in life than that which their dress imported, had taken the opportunity to address her in some lone walk of the park; and to endeavour to give her hints, which seemed to have some relation to the fate of Alice. She inferred that Alice was in confinement, exposed to the most dreadful threats and perils; and that unless a discovery could be made, and a rescue effected, it would soon be too late.

A person was darkly sketched, as one to whom application ought to be made, and who had the means of deliverance. But he was described as one who would unwillingly listen to such a supposition; who would resent it as an affront; who, for his own sake, would use all means to

avoid interference, lest, in some other way, it might implicate himself.

These people would say no more; declaring that their own lives depended on its being unknown, and even unsuspected, that they had given these hints; and that if Susan discovered that she had received any such communication, there would be no hesitation in consigning her to death in a few hours.

Susan, in the terror of mind which this produced, could fix on no one to whom this hint seemed to apply; and yet, in doing nothing, she accused herself of having the burden of Alice's sufferings and dangers on her conscience. Every hour that passed aggravated the intolerable anxiety.

In her extreme doubt, there was one person alone, whom, at moments, she felt an inclination to consult; one whose mind was sufficiently intelligent to give her advice; and whose honour and ge-

nerosity could be depended upon. It was her lover, the *blue-feathered* horseman, whom she could no longer doubt to be Giles Grey.

The urgent necessity of the occasion at length made her resolve to wait upon him. She borrowed a neighbour's pony, set out, and at last arrived at the gate of the Castle of Wolstenholme. She gained admittance; but not without the greatest embarrassment.

Giles Grey received her with delight, but not without excessive surprize. She said, "It is in the cause of the Lady Alice Berkeley that I wait upon you. You have heard the story of her disappearance. Some horrible violence has been used in taking her away. For Heaven's sake, assist me in devising means to discover her." She then related the dark intimations which had been given to her, accompanied by the threats against divulging them.

Giles Grey heard these intimations

with amazement and trembling. A thousand dark and half-formed ideas crossed his mind; he perceived that not a moment was to be lost, yet his thoughts were a chaos. His own suspicions fixed on Browne, yet they were not unmingled with others, which filled him with still greater horror.

He had been unwilling to think ill of Browne, who had been introduced by his uncle, Sir Ambrose, and highly commended by him. But for his own part, he had never trusted or liked him. He had long suspected his duplicity, and his profligacy.

Indeed there were many respects, in which his uncle, Sir Ambrose himself, had always been a subject of extreme uneasiness to him. Giles had never once, in his whole life, been invited or admitted into his house at *Hellingsley*. Yet he knew that Browne had frequently spent weeks with Sir Ambrose there.

A large part of the wild rumours,

which had for many years attached themselves to the character of Sir Ambrose, had indeed been withheld from the ear of his nephew: but still enough had reached him, to hurt both his pride and his delicate ideas of virtue and honour. It was said, that Sir Ambrose had been a terror to the female chastity of his humbler neighbours; and that his house had been but too much the scene of orgies, which put all morality at defiance.

Browne's association to Sir Ambrose in the convivialities of this house, confirmed that opinion of his dissolute manners, which a thousand circumstances had induced him to entertain. He was not a man to be entirely misled by the occasional plausibility of Browne's sentiments and reasoning. He often saw the cloven foot beneath the disguise of his dress.

But what could Giles Grey do upon this occasion? What he could do, he would have done for the sake of the suffering

Alice, as well as at the prayers of the beautiful Susan. He said to her, "You act worthy of yourself, worthy of that divine face and tender voice, in the generous part you have taken, Susan. You have not made an ill choice in putting this confidence in me. I love you for it, more, if possible, than I loved you before. I ask not how you found me out: I suspect from *Hal of the Hall*, how it happened. Be assured there is no toil, nor any danger, that I would not incur to save Alice Berkeley, if I knew the mode in which to act, and the direction to pursue.

"But, alas! the hints you have received are too dark to give me a sufficient light to know how to act. There are, I fear, some concerned in this black business, who think themselves above the law. We suffer from a dreadful laxity of police. Our feeble monarch can never act with decision and firmness; though he often does tyrannical, and sometimes even cruel things."

Susan was almost overcome with despair at this cheerless representation. She uttered no affected or loud expressions of grief: but her dumb sorrow still more won upon the affections of Giles Grey.

She was about to take her leave. He said he would not distress her before the servants by accompanying her from the castle. He ordered a faithful old domestic to accompany her back towards Hardingville, saying, openly, that she had been trusted with a letter from the friends of the Berkeley family, engaged in the search for Alice.

CHAP. III.

HUNTLEY ENCOUNTERS BROWNE. — DUEL. — HUNTLEY BADLY WOUNDED. — CONTINUED SUSPICIONS OF BROWNE.

HUNTLEY continued to traverse the country. All his suspicions remained fixed on Browne. He at length heard that Browne had been seen in the neighbourhood. It was even reported that he had rode through the village of *Hellingsley* in the dusk of the last evening: and some went the length of asserting, that they saw him pass over the draw-bridge of *the Hall*, when the gates were closed upon him.

However, the greater part of the villagers doubted this last part of the intelligence; and said, that he passed round the rookery, and up into the forest.

One or two persons insisted that it was only his ghost; and said, that when they approached it, it vanished, and then appeared again; that a flitting flame was round its head; and that before it vanished, it shrieked like the sound that is often heard in a gust of wind, which precedes a storm.

The agitation at this time in the minds of the inhabitants of the village of *Hellingsley*, exceeded any thing they had ever been accustomed to. They had long had the name among their neighbourhood, of being the most superstitious of all the inhabitants of the forest, or the province. Their stories now continued to multiply, till no other village would listen to them.

Huntley so far gave credit to Browne's having been seen at *Hellingsley*, that to the environs of that place he continued to direct his principal vigilance. He passed the twilight of many evenings; and the first dawn of many mornings in

the purlieus of the forest that abut on that village. At last he perceived, or thought he perceived, by the shadowy light of the moon, a horseman, who had the air of Browne's figure. He pursued it; but either the horse moved quicker than his; or it was an apparition, for it disappeared. He imagined that he saw it enter a lane.

Undaunted, and well used to the tracks of that part, he darted out of the road, and pushed across two fields, by which he joined an onward position of the circuitous course of the lane by a shorter cut.

On his arrival at this point, he heard the tread of a horse behind him. He turned round; and stood steady. The horseman advanced. It was Browne!

"Ha!" he cried, in a loud, but firm tone: "have I met thee at last, villain? Stand, and answer my inquiries!"

"Who art thou," answered the other with a Stentorian voice, "that thus chal-

lengest with insult, one whose strength thou hast not tried?"

"Look at me!" replied Huntley; "undauntedly, if thou darest; and thou wilt have no occasion to ask my name!"

"Ah! Huntley," cried Browne, with an affected taunt, "the youthful and gallant Huntley thus doubly courageous this evening. In whose cause art thou come forth such a knight of adventure, my brave boy?"

This mockery will not do, Mr. Browne," exclaimed Huntley; "I come to demand, if thou canst clear thyself of the foulest crime that ever stained a man."

"Forsooth," said Browne, still laughing, or affecting to laugh; "this is really very surprising: has ought deranged thy brain, young man? or has Bacchus been a little too busy with thee this evening?"

"Wretch," cried Huntley, "base wretch! this raillery will not avail to conceal thy guilt!"

"Guilt! what mean you by guilt? how dare you talk of guilt?"

"I mean that thou hast done that for which, if there were a thousand hells, they would not be fierce enough for thee!"

"Really this does go beyond a jest, Mr. Huntley! what can it mean?"

"That thou art guilty of the death, or of the disappearance of Alice Berkeley!"

"These are, in truth, serious accusations. It will be necessary to make good your words."

"Thou hast hitherto withheld the proof; it can only lie in the truth of my sword!"

"Do not trust to that feeble weapon, boy! my arm is stronger, and more experienced than thine!"

"No taunts! thy wicked conscience will weaken that brawny arm!"

"Well, then, if thou wilt rush upon thy fate, boy, thou must! thy blood will not be upon my head! but take till the morning, and consider better of it; by that time thy unjust rage may subside."

"Add no more insults, Browne, to the unutterable crimes thou hast committed. If thy conscience will permit thee, meet me to-morrow morning an hour after dawn, at *Robin's Oak*, in *Aveling* valley, which you know is on our right, not a quarter of a mile from hence."

"Huntley, think again, I say, before thou callest me to such a combat!"

"Coward! come forth at my call, or bear the dastardly name, wherever my lips can pronounce it!"

"Enough, mad boy! remember my forbearance! Go to thy fate; it is not my fault! I meet thy challenge at the appointed hour!"

That hour came, and the parties were upon the ground. Each had a single attendant: they were armed with swords alone. Though revenge raged in the bosom of Huntley, it was a passion far inferior to his desire of discovering Alice.

"It is in thy power yet to satisfy me,"

said Huntley, addressing Browne, as they approached: "knowest thou aught of Alice Berkeley?"

"What pretence have you to question me on such a ridiculous subject? What right have you to suppose, that I can know any thing of her?"

"Answer me direct! the neighbourhood believe it, and I believe it."

"What will not fools believe?"

"Still evasive!"

"Poor silly boy, *evasive!* why thinkest thou, simpleton, that he who would commit such a crime, would hesitate to add to it a lie? And what should I do with Alice Berkeley?"

"A demon delights to stain innocence, and blast human joy!"

"Huntley, the attempt to pacify thee is vain! I would have avoided shedding thy blood, if I could! I would have avoided it for the sake of Sir Ambrose Grey. My patience increases your insults! Come on."

The assault was instantly commenced. They fought furiously. Huntley, though inferior as a swordsman, both in skill and strength to Browne, yet, by his agility, by his courage, by his devotion to his cause, pressed him hard. Browne, whose heroism was unquestionable, and who knew that he had a vast advantage in bodily power, as well as science and practice, for a long while kept on the defensive. At length Huntley drove a furious stroke at him, so well directed, that he could only save himself by a desperate aim in return. His mighty arm, with the quickness of lightning, plunged his sword into the body of Huntley.

Huntley fell, Browne himself endeavoured to staunch the wound: then left him to the care of his attendant, and fled. The attendant called the assistance of three or four woodmen, and thus removed the almost inanimate body of Huntley to a neighbouring cottage.

A surgeon was sent for, and intelli-

gence of the event was conveyed to Cheeveley. The vicar arrived, and prayed over the yet insensible body. Still there was life, and as soon as the surgeon would allow it, Huntley was removed to the vicarage.

The execrations of all the neighbourhood followed Browne. He had not been seen since the fatal morning. Again a story spread abroad, that he was secreted in the *Hall of Hellingsley*. The fury of the villagers began to spread. An inclination was shown to attack *the Hall*, and search into its dark mysteries.

This news was conveyed to Sir Ambrose Grey, who at that time lay ill at Wolstenholme. Sir Ambrose had influence enough to obtain a strong protection from the civil and military power of the county.

Superstition aided the defence, not a villager could be found to approach the environs of this haunted mansion of a night. The shadowy horsemen that

were reported to move round it; the screams that were heard in the air deterred the most sceptical, and the most courageous among them.

Sometimes, in the dead of the night, when the air was still, it was said, that up the village the name of *Browne* was distinctly heard pronounced in shrieks; and the words, *Spare me! for the mercy of heaven, spare me!* met the shuddering ears of listeners.

Mr. Scudamore was so much affected by these stories, that he quitted his house, and paid a visit to a distant friend. He could not abide the daily and hourly reports brought by the servants, with so many particulars, that his scepticism began to give way.

The suspicions of Browne grew every day so much stronger, that the friends of the Berkeley having the aid of the affair of the duel, again applied to the government to obtain a proclamation for the discovery of him. Browne's connections

were so numerous and powerful, that every obstacle was thrown in the way of such a measure. There was at length a tendency to grant it; but Browne's friends were privately advised to give him timely notice, if they knew where he was.

Huntley had now recovered from his insensibility, and the wound was doing well. But as nothing was heard of Alice Berkeley, his mental anxiety continued as acute as ever. Sir Ambrose Grey would have visited him, if his strength had permitted: being unable to quit his room, he sent his nephew Giles. This excellent young nobleman exerted himself to pour balm into his wounds. He brought a message from Sir Ambrose, to say, that he abandoned Browne for ever, but that he feared that he was gone abroad, far beyond the reach of any resentment.

He said, that he had never known his uncle so much affected, as by this affair: that his usual firmness and undaunted

view of affairs had entirely deserted him; that he trembled and wept, and seemed alarmed at every report, and every opening of a door.

In the endeavour to divert the mind of Huntley a few moments from Alice, he partly related to him his own passion for Susan Pembury. Huntley was not so far absorbed in himself as to feel no surprise. If Giles had a fault, he had always considered it to be too high a value of aristocracy. It had seemed to him, that he had deemed illustrious descent of more importance than it was. He had about him a delicacy and love of elegance, which was almost morbid. He thought it strange, that he could fall so violently in love with a cottage girl.

But there was evidently something quite out of the common course of things hanging over the fate of the houses both of *Grey* and *Berkeley*. Had they lived in the present day, we should have heard that they were "*worn out*," according

to the fashionable phrase, and that it was time to have *new races* with more energy and less absurdity! As to these *new races*, sprung from usurers, and factors, and jobbers, and dirty, servile, and obsequious placemen; and clerks turned judges, and school-masters turned bishops, the value of this infusion of *vigorous blood* is, I confess, beyond my comprehension.

It is true, that the very antiquity of a race does sometimes produce contortions and sinuosities. The numerous roots it has in the ground fall different ways, and its elbowing branches push out one another into eccentricities and excrescences. As far as it is sentient, it is trammeled by the past, and awed by the future. It has not the freedom of new houses that come unknown, with hope before them, and darkness behind them.

Could Giles Grey reconcile himself to a spot of obscurity on a pedigree of hitherto unclouded lustre? This would

indeed be a proof of the all-powerfulness of love!

Giles would have suggested to him light and comfort regarding Alice, if he could, but his own heart misgave him on that most dreadful subject. In his mind it involved so many fates, it would probably end in the frightful disclosure of so many extraordinary mysteries; it would show the human character in so profligate and degrading a light; it might perhaps be so completely the downfal of the reputation of more than one ancient house; that, whatever course the affair took, he saw nothing in it but misery!

His health, long declining, was deeply affected by this uneasiness. The times, in his opinion, were ominous. He saw the seeds of those disorders, which more than twenty years afterwards broke out into open rebellion. He saw the low, and the horrible sectaries who took advantage of the ignorant prejudices and passions of the low, vigilant and fe-

rocious to catch and exaggerate the faults of those above them; and he observed, with indignant disgust, the childish laxity of a government that had occasion to have all its cords of restraint strung tight.

Sometimes he looked to the grave as a resting-place, to which he was desirous to make an early retreat. But his conscience struck him, that he ought not to have raised hopes in Susan which he could not fulfil.

He believed Huntley to be the son of Sir Ambrose, but as the want of his father's marriage would prevent his succession to the honours or estates, he could, in the event of his recovery, do nothing toward the preservation of the family. All his reasoning could not overcome his hereditary prejudices so far, as to make him indifferent to the extinction of the male line of his family. There was indeed a remote branch, which he was not satisfied would be able

to establish their right; about whom indeed he felt little interest, on account of the imbecility of their character.

Huntley related to Giles all which had occurred between him and Browne, and all which had been said about *the Hall of Hellingsley*. Giles shook his head: he said, "Surely Sir Ambrose must be opposed to the truth of the suspicions, as far as concerns *the Hall*, and you must not, for your own sake, for the sake of your future prospects from him, lightly interfere there!"

CHAP. IV.

ALICE BROUGHT BACK, UNDER THE DISGUISE OF NIGHT, TO THE RECTORY, INSENSIBLE. — HER SUBSEQUENT STATE. — DILAPIDATIONS AT HARDINGVILLE.

Mr. and Mrs. Barney had worn out their time at the Rectory, since the disappearance of Alice, in a sort of stupefaction of grief. The vicar of Cheeveley had called one afternoon upon them, and had been endeavouring to console them, when he observed from the window some suspicious fellows passing and repassing along the lane, cross the little gate that opened into the front court.

He told the servants to be vigilant, for those fellows were probably in pursuit of no good. When he left the house, he noticed one of these men in a wood-

walk, not far distant; but the stranger avoided him.

A very dark evening came on, and the servants heard whistles in the road that led from the forest, and the trampling of animals; but they were afraid to stir out of doors. At length a loud whistle was heard at the back-door, and one of the servants was called by her name. It was long before she had the courage to move, and then she went, accompanied by the other maid.

As the door opened, all was still.—Candles were in their hands. A figure, wrapped in a thick cloak, seemed to lie upon a stand placed cross the door. One of the women shrieked; the other had more courage. The figure gently moved; it seemed a person sick. The light was brought fearfully towards the face—"*Mercy of Heaven!*" exclaimed the woman almost in a scream, "*it is the Lady Alice herself!*"

The whole house was roused.—She

breathed, but she opened not her eyes; and she had the ghastly pallidness of death upon her. They carried her to her chamber, and put her to bed; but she was insensible. The best medical advice that could be procured was sent for.

When she lifted her eyelids, she took no notice; but sometimes muttered feebly and incoherently to herself. The only chance intimated was to be derived from extreme quiet.

The earliest intelligence was given to Huntley, who, yet weak and in an early stage of recovery, could not be restrained from coming to the Rectory; and by visiting her bed-side, where he saw her death-like countenance and lost understanding, he was himself almost thrown back into distraction.

In a few days, some slight amendment took place in Alice's health; but her memory did not yet recover. Her senses rambled, and she continued to fall into

frightful agitations. — "O, but thou most cruel of wretches!" she exclaimed, "what! no prayers, no entreaties touch thee! — But that cup! I say I will not take that cup! Is it poison? O I wish it was! — I know it is worse than poison! Where am I? — Huntley, Huntley, wilt thou not stab him? wilt thou not tear out that relentless tyger's heart?" — Then she gave a low shriek, and sunk into stupor!

Again she would break out, — "But why these bars? why these stone-walls? why this prison-like look? why that eternal funeral sound, — that caw, caw, caw, and not a human voice? why that clank of chains, — that heavy movement of iron doors on their creaking hinges? I have committed no crime! Is it a crime to refuse communion with devils? — Eternal, all-righteous, all-merciful Father of the heavens, interpose against this triumph of Satan! — Art thou not Satan, thou most horrible of human

spectres! for thou hast put on an human shape to torment the world!"

Sometimes it seemed to be in a dream that she spoke: — "Tears, tears! — the tears of a crocodile! they move me not! Vows! protestations! — didst thou ever utter a truth in thy life? wast thou ever once sincere? — Put that horrible woman away! she has a serpent's tongue. — Eat! O no, no! But then, alas! how tardy a death is it to be starved! — Hardingville! thou art hastening to thy fall: but thou shalt not be disgraced by me. Come forth, ye silver crosses, and blast the sight of this destroyer! — Ah! that dear, quiet Rectory! I shall never see it again! Fond, deluded aunt Barney! didst thou nurse me up for this? Burst the walls, Huntley! Blow up these drawbridges, and doors of iron, and windows of stone! — Let in the air of heaven upon this scene of foul misdeeds!"

"I cannot sleep! Imps and devils grin

upon me! — they mock my prayers, they delight in my tears and my sufferings! But, away, away! they cannot touch me. I have a charm in the star, that looks down upon me over yonder sable grove of mournful trees!" ——

"And whose walls dost thou thus profane? who has given thee the liberty thus to blast them with infamy? While the earth lasts, Disgrace and Horror shall sit brooding upon this accursed spot!"

The medical persons said, that if Alice's life should be saved, there was great doubt whether her reason would ever be restored. Her mind had been convulsed by such horrors, that the effects of them might probably be never obliterated. Her virtue had apparently withstood all the trials to which it had been exposed; but at the expense of her mental sanity.

Susan Pembury was now sent for to be her attendant. It was believed that to Susan's faithful bosom might be best

committed whatever in her wanderings she might disclose.

Susan heard much which she could not persuade herself to repeat to Huntley; nor would she have done so even to Giles Grey, had she had an opportunity of an interview with him.

This affair continued to be the subject of conversation through the county, and the neighbouring provinces. Various were the comments made upon it, and various the persons on whom suspicions were thrown. The *Hall of Hellingsley* came in for its share of odium. There were many whom it gratified at once to contemplate the misfortune of a *Berkeley* and the disgrace of a *Grey*. The new families were rapidly gaining head, and there had commenced an organized system of pulling down the old.

All at Hardingville was one black cloud of unbroken sorrow. Sir Oliver glimmered away the sad remnant of life: his creditors left him a bare subsistence.

The demesnes went to ruin; the park-pales fell; the deer strayed over the country; the walls and battlements of the Hall decayed; the wind and the rain found their way through the vaulted roofs. Respect grew cold before impoverished revenues; the hoary-haired rustic shook his head, and the young one went out to seek better fortunes.

Tidings had arrived of the Heir of the family. He had been a wanderer, in the hope of repairing the sinking state of his house. He had fought both in Germany and in Italy, and had gained laurels and promotion; but at the expense of some wounds, and a broken constitution, and with only slight pecuniary recompense. He had flattered himself that he should return to the seat of his ancestors, and spend his old age not only in tranquillity but in some degree of splendour. His memory and his fancy pictured it to him yet magnificent and imposing. The mouldering marks of time in its fair un-

aided operation he would have been proud of. The ravages of the usurious and iron-hearted creditor he was not prepared for. Half, perhaps the whole, of the value of his life-interest in the remaining estates, would not put back the domains in the state of repair in which he quitted them.

Ye who have wept over a ruined house; ye who have felt a palsy at the heart at beholding the cold solitude of the faded hall, that was wont to be lighted with splendor, and ring with hospitality, and music, and song; ye who have sighed along the choked walks, and shrunk from the grass-grown courts; ye who have beheld with indignant horror the insolence of the purse-proud citizen, issued from his trim villa to triumph over its devastation; — ye can sympathise with the agonies of mind that awaited the returning Heir of Hardingville.

And had Alice no sister to lament over her wrongs, and soothe her sorrows?

Alas! she had a sister, if possible, more permanently unhappy than herself. She had been brought up in the court, and taken under the care of a great lady, too fatally known in history, while she was in the full tide of favour and glory. This was the beautiful daughter of the Lord-Treasurer Suffolk, the wife (afterwards the divorced wife) of Essex, and re-married to the favourite Carr, Earl of Somerset.

CHAP. V.

GERALDA BERKELEY.—EARL AND COUNTESS OF SOMERSET'S RETREAT.—SIR MAURICE RODNEY.

Geralda Berkeley, who was older than Alice, was scarcely less fair. Her lot threw her into a dissolute court, where all sorts of temptations surrounded her; and unhappily she fell to the protection of one who was the most dissolute of the whole, the too celebrated Countess of Somerset.

She became involved, however unjustly, in the calumnies attached to this wretched Countess, before she had experience to caution her or time to reflect. By some sort of fatality, therefore, or helpless submission to circumstances, she linked herself to this miserable woman's

destiny, and became the companion of her retirement and disgrace.

It would be difficult to make the censurers of the human character believe that the companion of such a being as the Countess of Somerset was innocent; yet, in truth, Geralda was virtuous, and even untainted.

She had formed an ardent affection for a young nobleman of the court, who, when the Countess's infamy became known, deserted her. She never blamed him; she thought that appearances justified his conduct.

He was a man of a high spirit, and had a romantic sense of the delicate purity which ought to belong to the female character. He was a familiar friend of Giles Grey, who about the same time had rescued himself from a snare, of which the bitter remembrance had clouded the colours of his life. This, perhaps, had contributed to the suspicions of the lover of Geralda.

In a sort of profound and devoted despair, she resolved to share the fate of her whose infamy had blasted her hopes, and to retire with her to the impenetrable obscurity, where human injustice might no more insult her.

At one time the retreat was made to a lone farm-house, in a remote part of the west of England. What amusements could minds so loaded as those of Somerset and his Countess find in such solitude? They were not stripped of all their wealth. Somerset made gardens, and cut out walks, and pursued the sports of the chase and the gun, in the neighbouring forest.

He had a friendship for Geralda, which the vicious course of his former life did not at all taint. He even mixed a present sense of religion with the memory of the frightful crimes, of which he had too apparently been an accomplice.

Geralda's tender and instructive conversation was a sort of balm to the tem-

pests of his mind. She always dwelt on mercy and charity, and on virtue of heart, never too late to be recovered. She gave herself up to a sublime and visionary abstraction of the soul. Somerset was not a reader himself; but to gratify her, he procured books; and one or two men of literary genius, whom he had patronised in his days of prosperity, still visited him in his retreat.

The foremost of these was *George Chapman*, the dramatic poet, and translator of Homer, who was enchanted with the intelligence, taste, eloquence, and enthusiasm of Geralda. He knew well how cruelly the world had used her, and deeply pitied her fate.

He assisted her in her choice of books, and encouraged her in reading poetry, which abounded in elevated sentiment, and had a tendency to lift her above the frowns of fortune. He also directed her to many works of history, because he deemed that they were adapted to in-

crease her fortitude, and to accustom her observation to the frequent and appalling calamities to which every station was exposed.

The Countess bore her fall with less magnanimity than her husband. She was by nature more light and vain, and had more intrigue and less placidness about her; but Geralda had obtained an influence over her mind, which perhaps was to be attributed to the power of goodness, and purity, and talent, over vicious and perplexed levity.

A young man, benighted after the chase, having long wandered, lost in the forest, had been at length attracted by the lights glimmering from the windows of Somerset's solitary retreat to direct his way to the house. He was admitted as a guest; and having the appearance of a man of rank, was introduced to the Earl and Countess, and Geralda.

He soon made it known that he was attached to the court, and had lately left

it. His guests, who had never seen him before, knew that he must have been introduced there since their retirement. He spoke of the latest court incidents; but it was clear that he was not aware of whom he was now enjoying the hospitality. This person was *Sir Maurice Rodney*, of an ancient family and large fortune in the west. The Countess felt her spirits elevated by the revival of buried ideas, which ought to have given her pain. She encouraged Sir Maurice to relate his gossip; and the young man felt himself delighted with his company.

The Countess, faded with sorrow and disappointment, had yet the remains of extraordinary beauty. Nor were her powers of fascination extinct; she yet had them at her command, whenever she chose. Sir Maurice, inclined to look with admiration on the more girlish form of Geralda, yet hesitated at the matured majesty of the Countess's figure and face.

The Countess could not refrain from indulging in some portion of her former coquetry; yet she was not so ungenerous as to wish to withdraw his attentions from Geralda. She knew that he would be an advantageous alliance for her, and encouraged his apparent admiration of her *protégée.*

The next morning Sir Maurice quitted them, having, by the broader light of day, been at once determined in the object of his preference. As this secluded family were not known in this neighbourhood by their real names, he did not guess by what celebrated persons he had been entertained. When he reflected on the conversation which had passed, the remarks, the *ton* of fashion, the evident familiarity with the whole penetralia of the court, he did not doubt that these persons had moved in high stations; and he suspected that they had some reason for concealment.

Sir Maurice had not been long absent

when he found that Geralda had made a great impression upon his fancy. He had a romantic mind and a warm heart; but he wanted prudence, and gave himself too much up to whatever inclinations seized him.

In the course of a fortnight, he came again to pay a visit to this retreat. He then expressed passionate love for Geralda, and entreated the Countess's leave to make serious proposals to her. The Countess advised him to be less hasty: she said Geralda was only to be won by slow and assiduous attentions; that she had a peculiar mind; that her notions of attachment were strict; that she was not "obtrusive;" and would "not unsought be won;" that, as she would be constant when her affections were engaged, so she would be slow in engaging them.

This, instead of damping the ardour of Sir Maurice, inflamed it. The more difficulties he had to encounter, the more impetuous he became. Geralda was not

to be so overcome. She had long formed a resolution, — the result of a great mind, — to bury her affections in the bosom of him who had deserted her. In addition to her affection for him, she had resolved not to subject herself to the chance of future reproaches for calumnies, of which, though she ought not to have borne the smallest participation in them, she too well knew it would be impossible to convince others of her entire innocence.

Sir Maurice was not disagreeable to her; but he wanted solidity, and that strength of character which her taste and understanding led her to admire. She was well aware of the advantages of his large fortune and honourable alliances, and she felt with keenness her own dependent and mortifying state; but her resolves, which were never adopted without long reflection, were not easily shaken.

The more she reasoned with Sir Mau-

rice the more he admired her. He said her sense, her modesty, her virtuous sentiments astonished him; that he had hitherto feared the dangers of marriage; that in the present case alone he was without a doubt. She assured him that she did not deserve his compliments; that as he raised his hopes extravagantly now, so he would be disappointed hereafter. She pressed him to return to the court, and she was sure that he would alter his opinion.

"It is the comparison with the court," said he, "that confirms my passion. I hate the women of the court: they are as inconstant as the wind; and perhaps as dissolute, or at least as deceitful, as inconstant."

"O, this self-deluder!" said Geralda to herself, "how little he thinks now that all *my* education has been in a court; and, according to *his* notions, in company of all others the most dangerous! I cannot disclose this to him; yet

how, some future day, he would reproach me for it! O, light, unreflecting man! it is not in courts or in obscure solitudes that Vice or Virtue dwells! It is in the Heart, wherever it may be stationed,—surrounded by seducing society, or nursed and lessoned by whispering trees."

The coldness and discouragement of Geralda at length drove Sir Maurice away. He retired to an old paternal mansion, where he fanned his flame by giving full vent to his imagination, and by feeding upon every congenial poem and romance which he could find. He had long been in the habit of writing amatory verses; he now composed a series of *Odes* and *Sonnets*, addressed to Geralda. Some of them he sent to her; others had a warmth in them which he thought would displease her. The Sonnets had the title of DIANA; and many of them may still be found in MS. collections: they were not without merit, when compared with the minor poems of

the day. Geralda loved poetry; but these pieces were not entirely to her taste. She loved that which had a tone of more profound melancholy, mixed up with more moral reflection. These were too airy, too full of mere youthful ardour. Sir Maurice had known no sorrows but those of his own seeking. He had been the dandled child of fortune,—spoiled by indulgence, and made unhappy by commanding all that he wanted.

He could not long refrain from paying another visit to the object who had now taken possession of his heart. Geralda received him with a mild but firm reserve. The Countess interposed in his favour. Geralda said, "My affections are not at my command! I implore you to leave me to my destiny!" The Countess answered, "Think of others as well as yourself. You see how unhappy Sir Maurice is: he will work himself into a phrenzy."

"Lady Somerset," she replied, "there is *no reason* in giving *myself* up a victim

to *his want of reason!* Such irrationality decreases my chance of comfort as his future wife, and strengthens, instead of weakening, my objections to him. When he had obtained me, he would find out some new whim, and rave, perhaps, because he could not catch the moon."

The Countess, who had been sent by Sir Maurice with a message of intercession, came back with a blank countenance. She said, "Geralda was an excellent girl; but a little too persevering, when she took up an opinion. She had, therefore, not been able to make the impression upon her in his favour she had hoped; but he must trust to time, for women were scarcely ever known to withstand importunity."

Time and perseverance were, of all things, least suited to the character of Sir Maurice. He was full of fire; and impatience was his most marked trait. He went home gloomy and dissatisfied; still he could not throw from his contem-

plation the person and manners of Geralda. He wrote her several ardent letters, imploring her mercy and her love. Her answers were mild, rational, and eloquent; but they were not favourable to his suit. Still there was a charm in them, which continued to add fuel to his fire: while he lamented her coldness, he was filled with admiration at her virtue, her modesty, her talents, and her heart. She had the command of a fascinating style of language, which arose from the predominance of a lofty sentiment, coloured and chastised by the highest degree of moral sensibility, rendered still more deep and touching by the sorrowful events of her life.

On these letters Sir Maurice continued to brood, till his fancy got the entire mastery over his reason. He at length addressed a wild letter to Geralda, of which the very violence operated additionally to his prejudice. It was then

that Geralda took the opportunity to send him a final rejection of his suit.

He received it with trembling; read it over twice; wrote a reply in his blood; then retired to his chamber, and shot himself.

CHAP. VI.

HUNTLEY RETURNS TO WOLSTENHOLME. — DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE OF HEALTH AND FEELINGS IN WHICH HE FINDS THE FAMILY OF GREY. — COURT SCANDAL.

WHILE Alice Berkeley's recovery proceeded so slowly, as often to leave doubts that it ever would be perfected, Huntley, impatient and worn out by daily suspense, resolved to execute his long-delayed return to Wolstenholme.

He was nearly well from the wound received in the duel with Browne; but still his health was delicate, and required care.

When he reached the castle, all met him with open arms. Even Margaret Grey forgot her resentment, and treated him as one rescued from the grave. Sir

Ambrose was much broken: the ruddy colour of his cheeks was gone, and his muscular limbs began to tremble with debility. "My boy, Harry!" said he, with tears in his eyes, "I did not think that I should ever look upon thee again! Welcome to the Castle! Welcome to these old arms, my brave boy! and curses on that wretch, that perfidious wretch, who dared to shed thy precious blood! But ah, brave boy, I know that even that gigantic arm of his could not daunt thee. Well, the villain is fled—is he not?—Beyond the seas, I hear!—"

Giles Grey received him scarcely less affectionately, but more mildly. Lord Grey himself recovered some of his former energy, and warmly embraced him.

But great alterations had taken place in the whole colour of the household at Wolstenholme. All was silent, gloomy, and almost desponding. The bloom and vigour of life was gone. Hospitality had

become troublesome; for no one of the family had spirits enough to entertain their guests.

There are many things attendant on an ancient illustrious house of this class, which, though of course not peculiar from any pretended difference in the native structure of the head or the heart, yet become so from the long operation of accidental associations. They have stimuli and responsibilities appropriate to themselves. It is true, that they sometimes rely on borrowed and reflected virtue: but on what do they now rely? —their purse:—it will be said, on their merits: yet of what nature are these merits in the generality of cases? Men who have to force their way into notice, from obscure birth, have generally more activity; but for what is that activity generally exerted but for selfish ends?

The desire of family permanence is almost inherent in persons of the station of the Greys. A certain fixed presage

of their approaching extinction had now seized them. Giles felt within him the symptoms of decay so strong, that he could not contemplate his affection for Susan with any hope. A determined melancholy had seized upon all his thoughts; and he began to suspect that there would be a contest about the succession, of which he had a strong abhorrence.

Sir Ambrose had for some time given many hints of a tendency to acknowledge Huntley as his son; and Sir Ambrose was always so dark in all his schemes, that he kept the direct, honourable, and scrupulous mind of Giles always in a fever. Nothing is more common than a wide difference in the characters of near members of the same family. No two ever differed more than those of Giles and Sir Ambrose.

Lord Grey had grown almost indifferent to terrestrial concerns. Sir Ambrose had given up the scheme of the marriage he had intended for Margaret Grey. But

he seemed to be pondering in his head other matters regarding the future fate of Huntley, which Giles could not fathom.

"Nephew Giles," he said, "your lot and mine in life have been very different, and our tastes have been as different as our lots. You have often, I know, deemed me too turbulent and restless. In these days of my growing weakness I begin to think so myself; but your enlarged and liberal understanding will make great allowances for the habits of a younger son, with a scanty portion, educated to arms, in an age of agitation and adventure. My judgment is not so blinded as to suppose that we are entirely at the mercy of fortuitous circumstances: if it were so, virtue, I am aware, would be only a name; but it is certain, that your lot protected you from these temptations. It is probable that you may have been exposed to others, from which I have been exempt." Giles smiled with a pale assent. "You see," he went on, "we

are willing, on the verge of the grave, to seek out as many palliations and comforts as we can. I have not accustomed myself to the skill of a nice-moraliser: it is too late for me to moot delicate scruples of conscience: my life has assuredly been a very rough one; and what has been rough can hardly be expected to have been very correct. The custom of our family, perhaps of all other old families, of talking of those who have gone before us, gives me some uneasiness. I may not be able to arrange affairs before I die, quite to my satisfaction. Some things may hereafter require an explanation which I cannot now give. I speak in reference to others, as well as to myself. For myself, I will not deny, that I am unable to suppress that dread of being spoken ill of, nay, that desire of being spoken well of, after death, which seems so strongly implanted in our universal nature. I hardly dare say, '*Speak of me as I am!*' I need not say *to you*, '*Set down naught in malice!*'

"No man is proof against the arts of deception. I had the vain presumption to think, that I could not be easily deceived by my companions. But I *have been* deceived by that deep villain, Browne. He is probably safe on foreign shores for the present; but the day perhaps may come, after I shall be laid in my grave, when, by those powers of intrigue and corruption, which he so supremely possesses, he may make his peace at home, and return. When I am gone, I know him two well to have any hope that he will refrain from sacrificing my memory to his own defence.

"Your good father, who so justly possesses your respect and affection, though his strength began to give way long before mine, will probably outlive me. I will confess to you, that my too imperious temper has, through life, taken an unjust lead of him. I was always conscious that his talents were far better than mine; but I could not refrain from

the temptation to take advantage of the ductility of his temper. But when I was doing wrong, I knew him too well to make him the confidant of my conduct; he had a strictness of principles and of honour, which his ductility never made him compromise. I would say more to ease the burdens of my heart; but I grow faint and sick: I must leave the rest to another opportunity."

Huntley felt embarrassed in his present abode, by every sort of anxiety and difficulty. The distressing memory of his desertion of Margaret Grey; the decaying health, the lost spirits, and rueful countenance of Sir Ambrose; the sure, though tranquil, approach of Lord Grey to the grave; the rapid decline of Giles in the prime of life; and most of all, his profound affliction for Alice, and his prospect of the clouds that were interposed to their union, added to his utter deficiency in the means of future support.

He beheld the dangerous state of Giles's health with aggravated uneasiness, both in sympathy for one whom he had so much reason to be attached to, and from dread of the loss of a protector so necessary to one, who would otherwise be left alone and destitute in the world. As long as Giles should live, he could not want a home or a friend. There was a certain sort of fascination in the peculiar place in society held by Giles, for which, even if another friend could be found, no substitute could be afforded. I doubt if there be any language which can describe this peculiarity, so as to make it intelligible to minds of the present day. It could not be, even in those days, understood by the majority.

It was the union of his descent, his name, the historical lustre of his family, his rank, his feudal estates, with amiable and attractive personal virtues, sobered and mellowed by a life of early activity and experience, ended in disappoint-

ment, and dignified retreat. The effect of all this was, that, while he seemed utterly unconscious of it himself, he carried with him a weight that tranquilly, and without a murmur, put down all competition.

Huntley knew not who, if Giles should die unmarried, or without issue, would succeed him. Having latterly indulged the thought, that he himself was the son of Sir Ambrose, it roused in him uncomfortable feelings to be passed over in favour of some more remote branch, though he could not but suppose himself illegitimate.

Giles had apparently entertained similar sentiments; and they were confirmed by the dark manner in which Sir Ambrose had lately talked to him. He was not without curiosity regarding what Sir Ambrose might have to communicate, but his dread was still much stronger than his curiosity.

He had yet one or two correspondents

in the court. They wrote him word of the difficulty with which the proclamation against Browne had been obtained. They said, that numerous strange stories of this affair were circulated in the court. Browne's friends had been busy in representing it as a mere common elopement of a girl that chose to be fond of him: but they implicated other people more seriously, whom these correspondents did not name; but of whom the designations, though worded with great delicacy, gave the keenest alarm to the sensitive mind of Giles Grey.

One of these correspondents was unluckily the very nobleman who had formerly been in love with Geralda Berkeley, the elder sister of Alice. It has been already said, that he could never recover from the prejudices created by Geralda's intimacy with the Countess of Somerset, after the Countess's conduct became blazoned to the world. *He*, therefore, was too much disposed to believe in the light-

ness of Alice's character: but he was cautious in his expressions, and not ungenerous in his comments.

As the Berkeleys of Hardingville had fallen from their splendour, and no longer appeared dangling in courts and palaces, there was little inclination to pay regard to their characters, or consult their feelings or their honour. New races had got possession of the smiles of the throne; and ancient names, when they had not power to back them, were rather odious than acceptable. Many of the ladies commended Browne's gallantry, and thought it a good jest to carry off a rural beauty, in defiance of old mouldering battlements and musty towers; and return her back to her solitude when the lover was tired of her.

Some of them were inclined to set out on a progress to behold the seraglio, which Browne was said to keep in the neighbourhood; in which so many of his victims, willing victims, as they said, had been immolated.

Their inventions had decked this place with all sorts of wild appendages. Different descriptions were given of it; and different spots were pointed out for its situation. Among the rest, there was one picture so precise, as to fill Giles with wonder and alarm.

It unfortunately happened, that these rumours did not confine the charge to Browne. They said, that he was but the imitator of older companions, who were content to let him continue to pursue the game in the same spots, after their own strength had failed.

Two parties had risen in the Court; the *Brownites* and the *Purists;* and the whole court wit was now exercised on this subject. The name of the Grey family, as well as that of the Berkeleys, had been drawn in. The character of Sir Ambrose was given at full length in a ballad, full of raillery, in which he was called the *Green old Knight of Hell-Hall,* who had cuckolded half the pea-

sants of the province; and been familiar with half the peasant-girls. * Even Giles's own attachment to Susan Pembury seemed darkly alluded to.

Giles, whose mind was already weakened by ill health, took this intelligence more to heart than became his lofty spirit. His pride was deeply offended: he remembered the Court, when it would not presume to take the smallest liberty with his name. The fawners and the upstarts had now got the entire upper-hand; and no respect was any longer paid to birth, rank, or character. But most of all was he struck with horror at the character drawn of his uncle, Sir Ambrose. However exaggerated, he had too many painful suspicions that some part of it was founded in truth.

* See the character of Henry Hastings, of Woodlands, written by Lord Shaftesbury.

CHAP. VII.

GILES GREY'S EULOGY ON PRINCE HENRY.—HIS DEFENCE OF ALICE AND OF GERALDA BERKELEY.—HIS ATTENDANCE AT A COUNTY MEETING.

Giles answered these letters with a bitterness which his correspondents had never before experienced from him. He said, that the intelligence communicated had filled him with horror, not merely on account of the injured virtue of Alice Berkeley, and the gross insults to his own family, but for the mean, ungenerous, and gross character which they proved to belong to the Court. It was unworthy of a manly or decent monarch to allow, much more to encourage, such buffooneries. He said that every symptom of the times gave too strong evi-

dence, that some great storm was hatching in the civil organization of England; that the Court were acting like suicides upon their own station; that they were doing all they could do, to bring the cause of the kingly and aristocratical power into contempt.

"My dear, departed master!" he exclaimed, "how different was thy heroic, majestic, sagacious spirit! How didst thou abhor these groveling pursuits. Thou couldst condescend without losing thy dignity, and be stern without diminishing the love for thee. It was thy delight to cherish the noble heart, to smile upon the genius that elevated the soul; to encourage enterprise in generous dangers, the peril of the tilt, the glory of gallant darings. The jester was thy scorn; the sensual profligate was thy detestation. Thy bosom glowed with romantic affection, and trembled before the beauty thou believedst to be pure. Never wouldst thou have suffered the

gross humours of a factious peace to gather, and gangrene, and corrupt the contagious body of the people. Despising the entanglement of petty sophistries, even unapproachable by the sophist's web; scorning the pedantry of learning, but loving the essence of its nobler fruits, thou hadst seen, unblenched, the broad line of glory before thee; and followed it with majestic steadiness, while faction and intrigue had stood cowering and discomfited aloof!

"Thou hast descended early to thy tomb; the eagle-light of thine eyes has closed; and thy wings are buried in the dust! The crows and the magpies that fluttered round thee are still gay beneath the noon-day sun. Eternal and omniscient Providence, I bow to thy decrees; but they are dark and mysterious!"

Giles Grey then took up the cause of the Berkeleys. Having spoken with an eloquent enthusiasm of their antiquity, the numerous notices they had

obtained in history; and the tempests of time which had stripped and bared their branches and their trunk, he came down to Sir Oliver and his children.

"My dear Lord * * *," he said, "what could induce you to permit your pen to speak so lightly of Alice Berkeley? I thought you had been beyond the reach of the influence of the wretchedly poisonous air in which you live, while in attendance upon the Court. I know that *there*, almost every thing is corrupt; that chastity and fidelity in women is a chimera; that they are ready at the call of wantonness; and are as often the seducers as the seduced. But do you believe that this infection has also, in the same degree, contaminated the country? Do you believe that a girl of high and ancient family, brought up in the simple manners of the country, with a beautiful person, famed for an unspotted character, for great talents, and great sensibility, supposed to have a deep attachment to a

young man of her own age, would willingly and deceitfully elope with such a wretch as Browne, to whom no one ever saw her give a glance of encouragement, and to whom many have heard her express her utter abhorrence? If there be no truth in courts, there is yet truth in the country!

"And will not the government proceed rigorously against this abandoned man? Instead of righting an ancient and illustrious house, outraged beyond example, will they add the most insufferable insults to the encouragement of the most heinous injuries? Will they palter with jokes, and epigrams, and songs, and ballads? O, utterly unendurable age! how sick am I to live under thy revolting degeneracy!"

To the other nobleman, who had once been attached to Geralda Berkeley, and who had suffered his subsequent dislike to the Berkeley family to break out on this occasion, he was urged by the oppor-

tunity to take up the defence of the unfortunate Geralda.

" I have never, my dear friend," he wrote, " touched upon the story of your poor Geralda, since you thought proper to separate yourself from her. All appearances justified the resolution you took. Geralda was satisfied of the weight of those appearances, and submitted. But the consequences of those inferences, so apparently well-founded, yet so really unjust, must not be carried too far. For once in your life, you have been ungenerous; and you provoke me, even at the chance of disturbing your peace, to enter upon Geralda's vindication.

" Her character is certainly a very singular one; and even her self-devotion and her virtues have confirmed the impressions against her. I will say nothing of the unhappy Countess of Somerset. We both knew her in the meridian of her splendour; we had reason to dread her

fascinations, for they were pointed at our beloved and honoured master, who fled so early from a world for which he was too good. After all the black crimes which were afterwards proved against her, you judged that it would be madness in you, to select for life a companion from among those who had lived in intimate familiarity with her.

" I have since had occasion to know something of Geralda; no matter how. I believe that she is not only untainted, but that she has come out perfect from an ordeal of the fiercest fires. It has been a very strange companionship, no doubt, in which her youth has been passed. Virtue linked with vice is at fearful odds. But now and then it happens, that virtue, thus situated, keeps vice in awe; who hides her own hideous deformity before her. *

* Milton says—
" 'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity;
She that has that, is clad in complete steel;

"Geralda never blamed you. She was conscious that no prudent person could judge otherwise than you judged; but she kept her affection

Altâ mente repostam.

And knowing she cannot wash out the unmerited stain in this world, she is resolved to console herself by the lofty sense of not having deserved it. She has, with a devoted despair, resolved to

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And, like a quiver'd nymph, with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths;
In famous hills and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea, there, where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns, shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,
Be it not done in pride or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue, meagre, hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity."

Comus.

remain the companion of those, of whose crimes she has partaken in the obloquies, and, by a patient submission to the scorn and desertion of the world, to work out her way to immortality.

"Will you not then, my dear friend, feel the severe compunctions which belong to your generous nature, when you find that this angelic creature is the person of whom your misplaced suspicions have gone so far, as to extend the most frightful prejudices against her poor suffering sister, Alice?

"I do not mean to recal your love to Geralda. I believe that she would now reject your hand with a firm, but mild majesty of spirit; not from resentment. Never were her affections more benevolent than now; — but from the self-protection which is due to both.

"I have done. I am tired of the times, of their injuries, their calumnies, their cruelties, their degradation!

"G. G."

It happened, at this time, that Giles Grey was necessitated to attend two or three public county meetings, in which his rank and name threw upon him a prominent part. His mind, at the crisis, was in a state of strong irritation and disease. He imagined that he was received with coldness; that the countenances which used to meet him with smiles of respect and good-will, were reserved, and almost frowning. He lost his gaiety at once; and this re-acted upon those, whose looks had been the cause of it.

In truth, the *ton* and fashion of the court had spread into the country. There were, at these meetings, the heads or heirs of many of the new families, who had been hitherto awed into outward civility, whatever their inward feelings might be. Nothing delighted them like seizing the moment of prejudice to insult and abuse a superior. It was in conso-

nance with all the qualities of their mean and cowardly natures.

When Giles returned home, he brooded on these things. He fancied that the fate of the House of Wolstenholme was fast approaching. He had never shown insolence to others, when in full possession of respect, and when the tide of fashion was in his favour. He knew how valueless and empty it was. But still the loss of it, after possession, was excessively painful. It is the same with rank and riches: they who never have had them, are not, perhaps, less happy than those who possess them; but to *have had*, and then to *lose* them, is a positive misery.

Mingled with these complicated causes of dissatisfaction and sorrow, was the pain that Giles felt on account of Susan Pembury. He began to feel an assurance that the seeds of mortal decay were growing fast upon him. He knew that he had engaged the affections of

Susan; and all his feelings and principles led him to abhor the thought of leaving her a prey to the deepest of griefs and disappointments.

CHAP. VIII.

HUNTLEY REVISITS CHEEVELEY, AND THE RECTORY.

HUNTLEY's anxiety concurred with the wishes of Giles Grey to induce him to return to Cheeveley, that he might go over to the rectory to enquire after Alice Berkeley, and to report, at the same time, the present state of Susan's mind.

On his arrival at Cheeveley, the reports he received from the vicar were altogether favourable; but much of the gossip, which had created such unhappiness at Wolstenholme, having reached the vicar's ears, it created an embarrassment in the conversation with Huntley, which excited the curiosity of the latter.

Three things especially created a reserve in the vicar's communications: the allusions to the Grey family; to the *Hall of Hellingsley;* and the name of *elopement* given to Alice's disappearance, as if she had been a willing party to it. Two, at least, of these things, if hinted to Huntley, would, he knew, make him rave. The other had but too much entered into his own suspicions.

Huntley was the next day admitted to Mr. and Mrs. Barney, and was assured that Alice's health was very slowly, but gradually re-establishing itself; but that, as her very preservation depended on the most perfect quiet, and as the slightest relapse would leave no hopes, neither he nor any one else could be permitted to see her.

Huntley then asked leave to speak to her attendant, Susan Pembury. This was granted. Susan was called down; and soon afterwards Mr. and Mrs. Barney quitted the room.

Huntley had not seen her before. Susan started, as she entered the parlour. It was the strong likeness to Giles Grey which struck her. Huntley did not start; but his eyes glowed at her beauty. He asked after Alice with embarrassed impatience.

"I hope she is recovering, Mr. Huntley; but it has been a sad time, which nothing but her heavenly disposition could overcome."

"Are her spirits tranquillized?"

"They are beginning to grow less untranquil."

"Does she talk of what has past?"

"Only when she mutters in her sleep."

"Can you form guesses to account for this horrible affair?"

"Only little fragments; not enough to venture a conjecture on the whole."

"Can you give me no information that may appease my curiosity?"

"I really, Sir, am unable at present to satisfy you; but you may place the fullest

confidence in me, that whatever is for the mutual happiness of my dear Lady Alice and you, shall have my fervent prayers, and all the services and efforts that such an insignificant being as I am, can give."

Huntley thanked her with fervour: he saw that it was in vain to press the matter farther at the present moment. Another task now awaited him, not quite so interesting to himself, but in which he would have been truly ungenerous if he had not felt an ardent wish to do good.

"You are, I understand, a native of Hardingville," he said.

"I was born in that dear park," she answered; "and my life and services, and those of all my forefathers, as far as we can trace, have been bound to the Berkeleys."

"They have been lucky in breeding flowers of such extraordinary beauty."

Susan blushed, and cried, "Spare me flattery, Mr. Huntley; it has cost me

too much already. I have heard it from a voice and looks so like yours, that I entreat you not to remind me of it."

"Why should you not be reminded of it?"

"Because it was wicked and mad in me to listen to it."

"To whom do you allude?"

"You cannot mistake the person to whom I allude. Is there not a person in the world whom every one mistakes for you?"

"And why then wicked and mad?"

"O, you know too well; you know too well. Do not mock at me: he is far too high for me."

"But he is good, Susan, and he would not deceive you."

"I know that he is more than good. He is the most perfect of human beings: but this it is which increases my distance and my despair."

"You seem to be yourself the perfection which you attribute to others.

You know how to judge of him, as he of you."

"My own hopes and affections have not so far blinded me, as to be unaware of the difficulties in which he is placed. I am conscious that he has duties to his family, as well as to himself and others, to perform."

"Alas!" cried Huntley, "he is surrounded by difficulties, which his regard for others creates."

Susan turned very pale.

"I do not wonder at his taste," added Huntley, wishing to console her. She dropped a tear.

"I wish," said she, "I had never been at the fair at Norton-Berkeley."

"Why so?"

"O, you know too well!" she exclaimed, her whole face in a suffusion of scarlet; "you know too well!"

"Alas! Susan," answered Huntley, "we are all born to sorrows. Wherever nature offers us the means of happiness,

there the crosses of society defeat it. But let us hope, dear Susan! if beauty and merit can command happiness, you will be sure to obtain it."

He kissed her hand, implored her to continue her attentions to Alice, and departed.

The next day he returned to Wolstenholme. He related *to Giles Grey, his interview with Susan,* who was on the whole satisfied with what had occurred; and commended the prudent manner in which Huntley had conducted the conversation.

It was apparent to Huntley that Giles was descending into the last stage of a consumption. To encourage, therefore, his passion for Susan would have been in the highest degree culpable. It must be confessed, that his pride a little increased the disinclination. From the course of his education, he instinctively, and without being able to assign a reason for it, identified himself with the pros-

perity and the events of the house of Grey. He knew that no beauty, nor merits could, in the eyes of the world, prevent the effect of degradation to the family from such an alliance. He knew, also, the rage into which it would put all the other members of the family: and, though it might appear to others too contemptible a trifle to operate, he knew that the supposed degradation would be aggravated in the opinion of the *Greys*, by the fact of Susan being the daughter of a game-keeper of the *House of Berkeley*.

Yet he lamented that the male line of the family might probably become extinct. It seemed as if a fate hung over the Greys. The last of the Lords Grey, of Wilton *, had lately died in the Tower, having remained there many years a prisoner for his share in Raleigh's plot.

* He was son of Arthur Lord Grey, of Wilton, K. G.; the patron of Spenser. His sister married Sir Rowland Egerton. His aunt, Elizabeth Grey, married John Brydges, Lord Chandos, who died 1557.

CHAP. IX.

GILES GREY DIES.—A CHARACTER OF HIM; AND EPITAPH.

All the family of Grey, and every inhabitant of the Castle of Wolstenholme, at length became alarmed by the growing debility and death-like looks of Giles Grey. The uneasiness of his mind had aggravated the malady under which he was decaying.

He died on the 23d October, 1620, at the age of twenty-four, with a more general lamentation, not only of his family, but of the whole county, and several of the most illustrious persons of the nation, than had almost ever been remembered.

If I could draw characters in the manner of Lord Clarendon, I might

make of Giles Grey a more beautiful portrait almost than any which his vivid pencil has delineated.

Giles Grey, as the only son of an ancient baron, of high alliances, and a spreading feudal territory, himself endowed by nature with the most amiable virtues of the heart; an intellectual capacity of the nicest perception, and the most delicate taste; a gallant spirit; a form, if somewhat too slender, full of expression, and even majesty; came into the world with numerous advantages; and was, even when a boy, fixed in an honourable post about the person of Henry, Prince of Wales.

Early in the reign of King James, the old English nobility, who had possessed the esteem and favour of Queen Elizabeth, yet continued to hold an influence under the new order of things. They had been a good deal impoverished by the system adopted by the queen, of receiving expensive entertainments from

her nobles; and too many, therefore, accepted place among the new-comers in a manner somewhat degrading to their dignity. But they, who held themselves independent, still kept the court in awe, when they came to it. And aristocracy, at this time, still continued to possess a dominion over the minds of the people, which it is pretended that philosophy has done a great benefit to mankind in since destroying.

In the station and native qualities which thus offered to him such early enjoyments, it must be admitted, that, however attractive, there was more evil than good. To be hurried into a succession of wasteful amusements before the strength of the body and the mind is confirmed, is almost certain, like the fate of the spendthrift, to bring the means of existence to an end before their time.

Besides, it is not before reflection can mix itself with those pleasures which

operate upon the senses, that the enjoyment can be either permanent, or intense, or valuable. Lassitude and ennui follow over-forced exertion, and all that gives rest to the perception of material delight, is the intellectual movement that accompanies it.

The ladies of the court, who were always flocking round the Prince, paid his companion, Giles Grey, the most flattering attentions. In truth, Giles was handsomer than the Prince, and had by nature a still happier and more interesting manner. He could be hardly said to be less high-born, as far as regarded the royal blood of England, for he was equally descended from King Henry VII. by his younger daughter Mary, married to the Duke of Suffolk.

His early attachment has been more than once alluded to already. The lady deceived him; her vanity and the corrupt intrigues of a wicked court prevailed over her more natural passions; but she

had been violently in love with Giles, and in her heart far preferred him to the Prince. The prince knew not that she was admired by Giles, and still less did he suspect that Giles was a favourite of hers. She carried on her schemes with the most consummate art; and having two young men of high and romantic spirits to deal with, who would not stoop to mean suspicions; and who thought, that, in a beautiful and sweetly-smiling form, must be lodged as beautiful a soul, she acted as a Syren, whose delusions held for a time an absolute dominion. Her inexpressibly profligate father threw her secretly into the arms of the prince; while, with equal secrecy, he was courting a marriage with Giles Grey.

Giles had been a companion in some of the wild adventures of Sir Edward Herbert, afterwards Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who yet was not a great favourite with him, as he was far too metaphysical, capricious, and eccentric for

the simpler mind of Giles; and besides was many years his senior in age.

Among the delights of his few leisure hours, was poetry. Indeed, he made a few efforts in this sort of composition himself, but they did not rise much above mediocrity. Many reasons may be assigned for this; though he had an ardent fondness for poetry, and an extraordinary sensibility of its beauties, it must not therefore be inferred that nature had given him the capacity to originate it himself. Numerous are the minds which are fully awake to what is fair or grand, both in that which meets the senses, and in that which is raised internally in the brain, by the medium of language, who yet, in the one case can neither select nor define the leading circumstances of what excites their admiration, nor bring them so before the fancy, when the reality has vanished, as to convey a picture of them to others; nor, in the other case, form such new combinations from the

images called forth in their intellects, as to do more than reflect the forms in the exact shape and position presented by their prototypes. These persons therefore have what is called *taste*, but not *genius*.

But where the *native* power is possessed, where the qualities of genius have been indisputably conferred by nature, many obstacles may still be fatal to its development. As the fruits of the earth are not given by Providence in their true flavour and perfection without labour and skilful cultivation, so seldom are produced the due fruits of the mind without similar toil and discipline: images may course each other through the brain with incessant brilliancy, and fine emotions may rise in the heart with unexhausted copiousness; but to seize them in the rapidity of their flight, to fix them by language, and to communicate the reflection of them to others, is an achievement of extraordinary exertion and art,

which requires abstraction from other violent occupations and ambitions.

Giles Grey was thrown too early into the fever of all that could successively engross his senses for this. The long intervals of solitude and reflection which are necessary, were not permitted to his course of life. Whether, even if those intervals had been allowed, his habits while occupied in society, furnished the materials most propitious to poetry, may be doubted.

It is in the sentiments which are tinged by sorrow and disappointment, that the noblest tones of poetry are to be sought. There is a lightness in dandled and feverish prosperity, which strikes the lyre only as if in mockery.

When Giles retired from the court, he had better opportunities of cultivating any poetical talents which might have been bestowed by nature. But the effects of such a life as he had led, continued to operate long afterwards. They

left a languor, which required perpetual excitement, and a variety which could never settle into calmness: nor were his retrospects such, as were calculated to produce those soothing remembrances which are the food of poetry.

Is not then a superb feudal castle in the country, a large domain, the chieftainship of an illustrious family, and ancient honour; respect, love, hospitality, country amusements;—are not all these food for poetry? Perhaps by the very degree to which they are calculated to make an amiable mind happy, they weaken the stimulus of exertion by contenting it with the pleasures of existence.

It is not by a state of tranquillity, but of emotion, that the muse is most inspired. In the violent stir of all those various powers of intellect with which the poet is endowed, his reflections combine themselves in double force with the visible, and the invisible; with matter and with spirit; with the past, the

present, and the future. To him, the elements of nature are like the voices of a Divinity. The roar of the winds and the waves, the lonely sounds that travel the midnight darkness, the hum of the air under the noon-day sun, the whisper of leaves, the murmur of gentle rivers, the verdure and the flowers of summer, and the sublime desolation of winter, mingle themselves up with the workings of his thoughts, colour his creations, and receive a character from his mind, to which common eyes and understandings are utter strangers.

Death unhappily removed Giles Grey from the world before he had arrived at that maturity of age, at which the intellectual powers display themselves with most energy. As soon as his mental faculties began to settle into some order, from the continued effects of the quiet produced by his retreat, a series of family clouds and disturbances brought on a new sort of distraction. Then came the

decline, which made such fatal ravages on a frame originally delicate.

About the time when the fever of this deceitful complaint began, he had commenced a new sort of interest in the study of poetry. With a lofty excursive spirit, incapable of interesting himself about trifles of any kind, he had nauseated the petty conceits of minor ingenuity, which the great and little vulgar mistake for poetical merit: copies of verses of court-gallantry, epigrams, and vapid songs; and tinsal, or fulsome panegyrics. George Chapman had discussed with him the great ends of poetry; and all his fear now was, that it was above his reach; not below his ambition.

It seemed, as if he had waked into a new world; as if a film had been withdrawn from his eyes; or a veil had been burst, that let in a new creation upon him. He now perceived, that poetry united in itself the highest species of

moral philosophy, with an association to more exalted and more brilliant orders of existence. He saw that they who possessed this faculty, had a command of enjoyments, which neither rank nor wealth could give; and that things were clothed with colours in their eyes, which the vulgar sight could not observe.

Chapman was not himself always a happy example of his own theory. He was laboured, and often turgid; catching transient flashes of light amid surrounding and returning darkness; but Giles Grey understood and acknowledged the soundness and grandeur of this theory. The scenes of nature, the charms of the visble world, make their strong impressions by the aid of the mournful passions—of regret, and sorrow, and alarm.*

* Since this was written, a passage of Mad. De Staël, varied from this, yet on the same principle, has met the author's eye:

" Corinne n' éprouva que de la tristesse (en traversant la Toscane;) toutes ces beautés de la campagne, qui

Giles now accustomed himself to nurse that pensive melancholy which is the result of a sympathetic musing on the misfortunes of fallen humanity.—He saw only the grandeur and more sombre views of nature; he delighted in the storm, and the wintry dreariness. When the tempest came on, he was wrapped in profound thought by the roar of the blasts of the forest; and he would hail the gathering of the clouds, the blackness of the sky, and the floods of dark drenching rain; through which, after a chase amid the wildest of the woodland demesnes, he could return fatigued to Wolstenholme, and, withdrawing alone to his apartment, spend the evening in reflection, and fancy.

But it is long before the ideas form themselves into that just proportion be-

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l'avaient enivrée dans un autre temps, la remplissaient de mélancolie. *Combien est terrible*, dit Milton, *le désespoir que cet air si doux ne calme pas.* Il faut l'amour ou la religion pour goûter la nature." *Corinne*, 19. 212.

tween imagery and sentiment, into that happy selection of associations, which, while they are most striking and picturesque, are, at the same time, most true; of which the reader admires the exactness, while he is surprised by the novelty.

This discipline of the mind, though begun, was soon interrupted, not only by the petty attentions of ceremony and service, to which his representative rank in a feudal castle hourly and almost momentarily exposed him; but by the malady, which now began to fix upon him.

It has been said, that genius is paramount to all external circumstances; and numerous examples seem to favour this opinion, such as Tasso, Spenser, Chatterton, &c. But it does not follow, that, if adversity cannot conquer genius, rank and prosperity cannot enfeeble it.

There was a friend of the family, in whom this new turn, taken up so fondly

by Giles Grey, caused great regret and lamentation. He was one of those men, who have the credit of possessing what is called *excellent common sense.* It is not easy to define precisely what is meant by these words, *common sense.* The most general acceptation of them seems to be, a habit of judging, in the common affairs of life, prudently for the interest of the individual's own particular case; and an exclusion of any consideration, speculative or general; but more especially an exclusion of all fancy and every thing ideal. These men are therefore in the habit of considering poetry as not merely useless, but mischievous; and, what is more absurd still, as *childish.* How the application of this last epithet suggested itself to them, it may be difficult to guess, unless from having observed that the fancy of *children* is stronger than their reason; and therefore, inferring that all fancy is childish, even when it forms the lamp of reason.

This man, who had lived in the world, and with some credit, at least as far as his own advance in life was concerned, lamented in bitter terms the seductive pursuits encouraged in Giles Grey, by George Chapman. He ventured, in his blindness to assert, that they were unworthy of a man of rank, whose mind ought to be cast in what he called a more solid mould; and whose understanding ought to be more directed to practical affairs. Such men believe nothing real, but what they can see, and hear, and touch.

This Knight and Baronet, (for he was both; standing one of the very first in the original list of this latter order,) this gentlemen of *excellent common sense*, would, if he had been apprised of it, have had better reason to complain of the interference of George Chapman on another point.

George had endeavoured to promote a marriage between Giles Grey and

Geralda Berkeley. Sure of her purity, and of the utter injustice of the calumnies by which she had suffered; in admiration of her fine understanding, and her exalted moral feelings, he thought he should effectuate the happiness of both by this union of two so well suited by nature; but he did not duly appreciate the extreme delicacy of sentiment which ruled over the bosom of each of them. Giles could never reconcile himself to take the woman whom his friend had rejected: and Geralda, in addition to the fidelity of heart, which she had devoted to another, resolved never to expose herself to the chance of the influence of the prejudices which had once been excited against her.

Giles Grey made no will: for he had little to dispose of in his own right. But a few days before he died, perceiving the symptoms of his approaching fate, he wrote a paper of private directions, ad-

dressed to Huntley, of which the following are extracts:

"You, my dear Huntley, will receive my dying wishes with kindness; and execute them to the utmost of your power with fidelity. Many things hang heavy on my heart at this awful crisis. The story of Susan Pembury has been committed to your confidence. You have seen her, and can therefore believe, that she is as beautiful and innocent as I have represented her to you; but I am afraid, that I shall have been the cause of misery to her, for which I can make her no recompense. Make it my dying request to my father, that he will make such a decent settlement upon her, as shall at least remove her from servitude and dependence.

"There are many other matters, which I should wish to disburden my mind upon; but I have not the courage. I have many fears for you all; and I am too sadly impressed with the presage,

that there are many mysteries to be explained, which, if living, I should not have had the fortitude to endure.

"In this solemn hour of approaching dissolution, I survey my numerous faults with deep regret; but with a calm, though humble confidence of mercy. I only look with satisfaction on the few good deeds I may have done. I know what my heart and sentiments were in the midst of a depraved court; and though they then often excited a hard ridicule, yet, as they were then as full of pleasure, as I believed them to be of rectitude, so now the memory of them fills me with a glow of self-approbation, which far exceeds the delight of those happy hours. All vice is as inefficient, even for momentary enjoyment, as it is for future tranquillity. There is nothing of intense human pleasure, which is not partly intellectual; and there is nothing of intellectual delight, which is consistent with vice.

"Cultivate your understandings! we are not permitted great felicity, or even high virtue, through any other medium. I know from experience, that the joys of station and riches are poor indeed without it; they soon pall and satiate: they can command nothing of what constitutes the food and occupation of the higher part of our being here.

"I do not deeply lament my departure hence. Troubles have beset me, which, though they may appear fanciful to others, have been truly afflicting to me. Yet when I had commenced a new course of life, and found my intellects in a state of rapid improvement; when every day opened new scenes upon me, and made me see the old in a new point of view; when an admission to the moral beauties of this mysterious existence raised it both in my estimation, and in my faculty of enjoyment; when I had flattered myself, that, by continued labour in this course, I might send down

my name to posterity for far better possessions than titles and territories, I should have been grateful if it had been the will of Providence, that I should have remained a little longer in this mingled world of pleasures and sorrows."

In the chapel of Wolstenholme, was erected a handsome monument of marble, with the figure in armour, well sculptured, kneeling at a desk, in a praying attitude, with numerous armorial decorations, which was destroyed in the grand rebellion, when the whole chapel was despoiled, and left a shell, roofless, and with bare walls. The epitaph inscribed upon it was in the following words:

Here lies the body of
the Honourable GILES GREY,
only son and heir-apparent of
The Right Honourable the Lord GREY of the Wye,
who died at this Castle of Wolstenholme,
on the 23d day of October, 1640,
aged 24 years.

He was of the bedchamber
to the late renowned and glorious Prince
H. R. H. Henry Prince of Wales.
He died to the universal sorrow of his
relations, his friends, the county, and the nation.
As amiable, as he was virtuous; as wise,
as he was ingenuous;
Elegant in form; eloquent in tongue;
Gallant, generous, moral, religious;
Once the delight of the gay;
since the oracle of the grave;
admired by the old;
beloved by the young.
O death!
howcruel wasthy victory!
How early didst thou snatch him
from afflicted mortals!

CHAP. X.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF GILES GREY. —COMMENCEMENT OF THE LAST ILLNESS OF SIR AMBROSE.—CONFESSIONS REGARDING HIS FORMER COURSE OF LIFE.

Grief, and lamentation, and disease, seemed now to brood over the towers of Wolstenholme. The heir, the glory of his house, the flower of the Greys, had gone prematurely to his tomb! All at first were stunned with this blow of fate; the deep and wide effects of it were only slowly to be developed. It is not at first that the extent of real deprivations of this kind is perceived.

When a family loses some illustrious member of it, it mourns, as it must do, when a nearly connected amiable being descends into the grave. It is not at

that moment willing even to guess how much of its consequence depends on the lustre of that departed being. When the evening sun sinks behind the wave of the west, the glory of his rays remains a few minutes after he is gone in all its splendour: it is after a pause, that the darkness and the chill comes on.

The rich banners that waved in the chapel, the gorgeous ornaments of chivalry; the *blue bars*, quartered with *Berkeley* and *Plantagenet*, and *Tudor*, and *Brandon*, and *Clifford*, and numerous others, made a rich heraldrical display, which, when the occasion of it was considered, contrasted strangely with the deep desolation of the heart. Men of genius, or of moral sensibility, came from many distant parts to visit the grave. Some of the neighbouring nobles and gentry, who, though they had admired Giles, had suffered too much human leaven to mix with their admiration, now felt the most pro-

found and unqualified regret for him. All agreed that they

"Should never look upon his like again."

Many who had been jealous of the Greys, now that they thought they saw them about to be extinguished, began to see that this event would only let in some tyrant of an upstart race to domineer over them.

Lord Grey's faculties were now almost entirely gone. He scarcely seemed sensible of the unspeakable loss he had suffered. Sir Ambrose, still in possession of his faculties, felt it as a terrible blow on that prosperity of the house of Grey, which, however hard his affections might be, was twined with all the strongest emotions of his heart. His pride and ambition were mortified; and, above all, in the death of Giles, there was torn from him a sort of sheet-anchor produced by the virtue and benevolence of his nephew. Whenever he thought of his own doubt-

ful fame, he had looked to the virtue of Giles to redeem him.

All these aggravated causes of sorrow and regret, to one who had already begun to yield to the effects of age, disease, and uneasiness, began to make frightful inroads upon the vigorous constitution of Sir Ambrose.

His life had not been such as makes a death-bed smooth. He had scarcely known a day's illness, till the commence-of that which was now in its progress. Providence seemed to have permitted him to go on in the career of his pleasures, without giving him the opportunity of being warned by the reflections which occasional attacks on health produce. A hale frame of body, combined with his habitual pursuits, had enabled him to pass his life in violent exercise, crowned by riotous hospitality, and the indulgence of all his appetites. He was the most vigorous and the most skilful sportsman of his day. In hawking and in hunting,

he had no equal in his own and in all the neighbouring counties. He rode the fleetest horses, and had the best breed of them in the kingdom.

His talents were naturally quick, acute, and sagacious; but they had received no cultivation. His great animal spirits, his repartees, his wit; the air of nobility, which he had caught from his birth, and his boyhood; the gallantry of his person, the ruddiness of health which glowed in his hardy cheeks, all won him an unopposed way, wherever he chose to make his progress.

The character for eccentricity and whim in his manner of living at the *Hall of Hellingsley*, which excluded the admission of all society there, except a few of his own boon companions, was no obstacle to his own access to other houses, especially as at the Castle of Wolstenholme he had always a table, to which he might invite any whom he chose.

But now all these resources of his for-

mer life failed. The terrors of death showed all the pleasures of this world in a very different light. He continually called Huntley to his bedside. He said: "I have taken you under my protection from your birth. You have nobody to look to but me. Poor boy! what can I do for you? You see the House of Wolstenholme is at its extremity!—A fate hangs over it! Ah, dear, excellent Giles! departed hero, and angel, look down upon us! look down upon us! Let thy virtues intercede for thy wretched uncle! But, Huntley, I have much to tell thee; yet I cannot tell it, till I am better."

Huntley dared not seek to hasten the gratification of his own curiosity at the expence of adding to the agitations of Sir Ambrose. The next day, Sir Ambrose resumed his conversations.

"It was early," said he, "that I began to enter the eventful scenes of life. I was with the English army in the

Netherlands, when poor Sir Philip Sydney received his mortal blow. I saw him carried off the field; and I saw him give the cup of water to the dying soldier. I fought in Ireland against many of the rebellions of those *then* barbarous people. But my favourite adventures were those of Naval Discovery. We were large parties of us, younger brothers of some of the best families in the kingdom; and we always hoped to make money enough to spend freely in our country amusements, when we got home.

"I must confess, we were a wild set; we feared not God or man. We belonged to different counties; and we laid schemes for communication, and for the arrangement of our pleasures, which I now look back upon with horror. We obtained a grant of a tract of land in Virginia, in which we settled a few of our most desperate followers, such as had no desire to go back to England. We kept up constant communication with this set-

tlement; and here was the depôt and refuge of our most hazardous schemes.

"After one of these expeditions, I purchased the *Hall of Hellingsley*, which I chose from its propinquity to the forest, and at the same time from its not being inconveniently near Wolstenholme. Most of my companions either bought or hired old manor-houses, in different parts of the kingdom, suited to our purposes, all in the neighbourhood of forests or chases; and we so arranged it as to have a chain of communications from one part of the kingdom to the other. We were sworn to secrecy; and not a servant was admitted among us to whom we did not give the oath. On the least suspicion attached to any one of these, he was shipped off to Virginia.

"We declared war against the parks and forests of all the great men, whom whim or accident had not put under the protection of our favour. Above all, female beauty was the prize we most sought

after, and which we were determined to obtain at any hazard, whenever our inclinations were fixed. We have in Virginia a rising generation of the best blood of the country, whose near relationship to the great in England nobody suspects.

"For twenty years my table at *Hellingsley* has been nearly supplied by bucks from the park of Hardingville: and it is a terrible confession, which yet I cannot refrain from making, that my seraglio also has often been supplied from the same quarter.

"We practised every sort of disguise to carry on our pursuits. Our men were often sent out as *jugglers*, to which occupation we took great pains to train them: and while all the inhabitants of the castle or mansion were collected together in attention to their tricks, another set scoured the domains, and carried off such spoils as they chose.

"Though not free from superstition

ourselves, we constantly made use of its terrors to blind and mislead others.

"Our course of life had not, I admit, the higher species of enjoyment, for it was merely sensual. But as our animal spirits were great, and our health was vigorous, and we gave no leisure to reflection to interpose itself, the time ran on merrily, and we rode, and ate, and drank, and slept with high glee. We had no compunctions of conscience. The women, whom we ruined, we had no pity for — we smiled at their tears; and married the low to some of our retainers.

"On the last Monday in October of every year, we met in routine, at one of our residences, and spent the remainder of the week together. We compared notes; and under some limitations, shared our plunder, as far as money was concerned. We often took great booties without suspicion. Our first aim was the

great travelling waggons of merchandize, which were passing to the large commercial towns, or principal annual fairs. The extreme alertness of our men, the manner in which they were armed, and their adroit use of those arms, the fleetness of their horses, the reserves they kept within call, their excellent arrangements for the transit of such things as they chose to take, still aided by the line of communication which they kept up through the kingdom, secured them from all detection.

"Sometimes plans for taking a great prize were laid weeks, and even months, before-hand. To prevent the possibility of personal suspicion, the men were brought for this purpose from the most distant of the chain of residences, and sent back singly, as opportunity served, accoutred as livery servants, each with a led horse, and boldly travelling in the broad light of day.

"When sitting at the table of Wolstenholme, I used to hear the relation of some of these robberies, aggravated in every circumstance, and accompanied by a thousand ridiculous comments and conjectures, I was wicked enough to enjoy this *Tragedy of Errors*, and consider it as a *Comedy to me*. I could not help reflecting how little the good and the quiet know of what is passing in the world.

"There was the son of a nobleman, a partner in one of our foreign voyages, under Raleigh, who had been anxious to be admitted into our society. Luckily we rejected him. We did not think that he had sufficient discretion, and was wanting in other qualities necessary for the welfare of our association. Our principles were unquestionably very wicked; but we had principles of our own, which we called principles of honour, and which we never broke. This unhappy

young man, some years afterwards, committed a highway robbery, and was hanged.*

"Our policy was so good, that, either the government did not suspect us, or thought us too powerful to be attacked. As we had members in many of the great families, we were always well apprized of the rumours at the court, and were prepared both to watch and to mislead. Our determined enmity to the *Puritan Faction* has stood us also in good stead. Government had some suspicion of our existence as a political party, and knowing which way our opinions inclined, we had rather their good wishes than their fears.

"We have always been a great scourge to the *Puritan Clergy*. We have de-

* The son of a *Lord Sands of the Vine* was really convicted of a highway robbery, and was hanged. I think it was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and that it is mentioned by *Holinshed*.

lighted to expose to ridicule their hypocrisy and cant; and have repeatedly unmasked them, and shown them in their true colours, under the most ludicrous circumstances, which our ingenuity and the terror of our movements have effected. We have often taken their wives and daughters from them, and put horns upon their heads in mere sport.

"Huntley, I am afraid that I have already said a great deal too much to you. In these feverish fits of alternate despair and hope, a few minutes of intervening ease are followed by those solemn reflections, which the awfulness of my present state imposes. It recurs to me that I am not at the sincere point of repentance, at which I ought to have arrived, when I can look back on any part of the wicked course that I have led, without unqualified horror; nay, I cannot conceal from myself, that, in re-

tracing this sad story, some of the images brought back to my memory, revive a sort of momentary pleasure, as of joys past and to be regretted."

CHAP. XI.

THE CONFESSIONS OF SIR AMBROSE CONTINUED.

Sir Ambrose now required a pause. He was quite exhausted, and spoke no more that day. The next day he again called Huntley to his bed-side.

"Huntley," he cried, "I have yet much to say. I hope to live long enough, and to have strength enough to tell it. I I can only bring myself to let it out by degrees, and by gradual approaches.

"Among the things which hang most heavy upon my conscience, is the death of a beautiful and innocent victim to my lawless desires. Prepare your mind to hear me with firmness and without hatred. A frown, even an

excess of sympathy for the sufferer, will stop my tongue.

"You know too well the rooted animosities between the houses of Grey and Berkeley. In me, it was aggravated by the perverse energy of my disposition. Nothing has ever delighted me like committing depredations on the Park of Hardingville. But, alas! I was not content with committing depredations on the Park.

"Twenty years ago, there existed a being of the Berkeley family, of whom you probably never heard. Her name has been blotted from the pedigree, as if, lovely creature, she had been a disgrace to it.

"Sir Oliver had a sister *Elfred*, very many years younger than himself. She was engaged to Sir Horace Carey, a young man of family, but without fortune; amiable and clever, but thoughtless, and deeply involved in debt. In one of my secret rambles through the

Park, I set my eyes upon her; my glowing blood caught fire: I never beheld any thing so beautiful. It was forbidden fruit, and *to me*, the more inviting for that. I addressed her; she knew me not, for I was in disguise. She answered with a winning politeness of manner, which added to her attraction.

"I instantly formed the resolution to carry her off, and in a few days I had digested my plan. I made myself a master of every particular of the circumstances and movements of Sir Horace Carey; and though I had a young man of romantic gallantry to contend with, I was not to be deterred on that account.

"I easily carried off Elfred, by means of my myrmidons, and lodged her safe within the walls of *Hellingsley*. I had then to dispose of Sir Horace Carey, who, as I had learned, was to come the next morning to Hardingville. I had measures taken to get him arrested for debt; and then some of my people, who

were placed in ambush, forced him from the hands of the sheriff's officers, as if for the purpose of a generous rescue. Meantime we gave it out, that this rescue was made under the direction of Elfred, and that they had eloped together, and fled beyond the seas. I kept him a prisoner, till we could convey him to Virginia; and there he died of grief soon afterwards.

I had now Elfred entirely in my power. I endeavoured to recommend myself to her favour by every exertion, and every artifice which I could use. I could make no impression upon her heart, nor even upon her resolution. She continued to resist me with scorn or with tears. Her resistance still inflamed my passion.

"She entreated that she might have some female attendant on whom she could rely. I had seen, attending upon her walks in Hardingville Park, a peasant girl not more than fifteen years old, the daughter of one of the park-

keepers. I determined that this girl should be fetched to attend upon her, and some of my men easily effected it in the dark of the evening, without the smallest suspicion.

"Elfred was now a little easier in the presence of this companion. The girl was an handsome brunette, and soon found admirers in my household. But Elfred was still as resolute as ever against the advances of my passion.

"She knew my name: she had a sort of instinctive dread of my character. That this cruelty to her had been committed by a *Grey*, aggravated her sufferings. She poured forth bitter invectives against the whole of our house. She called down the vengeance of Heaven upon us; but I was insensible to all but her beauty. Her fair complexion, contrasted with her dark eyes and dark brown hair, enchanted me. She was tall, and had a beautiful form; slender, but with that

roundness without which there can be no grace.

"I was such a devil, that it increased my zest, that I had taken this prize from Sir Horace Carey. When she wept and invocated Carey's name, I smiled at her tears.

"The young brunette who attended her was less nice; she did not lose the elasticity of her spirits, but endeavoured to soothe her imprisonment by listening to the flatteries of the young men about me. We had rules of chivalry of our own, which were strictly observed; and did not interfere with each other beyond a rivalry for the chosen female's choice. *Sylvana,* (for so we named her,) caught, at once, the admiration of six of the finest spirited companions of my retinue, and each exerted himself to recommend himself to her.

"The spirits of the girl, thus kept up, enabled her a little to alleviate those of Elfred. She was devoted to her mistress

with a kind of enthusiasm like that of religion, bred in her from her infancy, with a sort of superstitious reverence for the House of Berkeley; but this did not obliterate her vanity and vivacity of feelings on her own account. Nature had given her lively talents, even eloquence, and a mighty and undaunted spirit. She was generous and compassionate, and mingled a sense of honour with a love of pleasure.

"I soon became acquainted with the qualities of her disposition and her understanding; and had occasion for all my vigilance to prevent her effectuating the means of escape for Elfred and herself. In this case, I feared the influence of her fascination over her young lovers.

"When, at length, she found all the efforts at escape which she had contrived useless, she struggled to soothe the mind of Elfred as well as she could, but in vain. Elfred's melancholy and despair grew every day more strong; her beauty faded;

but still, in the paroxysms of her wild and indignant grief, my hard and sensual heart thought her beautiful. At length, by terrors, by intrigues, by the arts of hell, I prevailed over her innocence."

As Sir Ambrose spoke these words, a shuddering came over him. He shrunk back on his pillow; and Huntley thought that he had expired.

CHAP. XII.

CONCLUSION OF THE CONFESSIONS OF SIR AMBROSE. — HIS DEATH.

SIR AMBROSE revived: but his life continued doubtful the remainder of the day. Huntley, in the meanwhile, looked back on all he had heard as on a dream. His thoughts were too complicated to allow him to see any thing with clearness. A portentous fate seemed to be hanging over the House of Wolstenholme.

The loss of Giles Grey became every day more sensibly felt. It could scarcely have been believed that the death of one person could have made such a chasm. All the mournful apparatus, the insignia round the castle, and more epecially in the chapel, which memorialized his death, wrung the very soul of Huntley.

Perhaps, too, he was the last male of

his race: yet, if he should have an hundred successors, none would be like him.

When it was necessary to pass the chapel windows, Huntley always averted his eyes; he would have shut his ears also if he could, for he thought he heard the banners flutter and wave mournfully, and imagined that he heard murmurs issue from them, which ran in cold shivering tremors to his heart.

Sometimes he met Margaret Grey, as he crossed the gallery to escape from these images and sounds of mysterious sorrow. Margaret's character had never shown in such exalted colours before. It had been the dying request of Giles Grey, that Margaret should lay aside all resentments, and live upon terms of strict and placid friendship with Huntley. It had cost her a few days of convulsion, but she made the arduous effort with sincerity, and conquered. She had already communicated this resolution

and its source to Huntley himself, in the same spirit of female heroism. Huntley saw this conduct in the light of admiration which it deserved.

The future prospects of Margaret were uncertain. No inconsiderable portion of the estates were an ancient crown entail. In the wars between the Houses of York and Lancaster, there had been several attainders, and restitutions, and reversals; but in these restitutions, the line of succession had been sometimes varied, both for honours and estates. Several legal opinions had been taken about a century before; and there was a good deal of disagreement and doubt among them. Among the main questions, was the diversity between restitution and reversal. If there was a complete reversal, a new line of succession could not be supported.

The person who supposed himself to be the next distant heir-male was *Reignold Grey*; but there were several doubts in

his case, I know not of what kind — whether of descent, seniority, legitimacy, or attainder.

For the reasons given, there were some doubts whether the *Barony of Grey of Wye* would not devolve on Margaret, as sister and heir to Giles. At any rate, she would seem to have a strong claim to another old dormant barony, the barony of *Berkeley of the Wold*, derived from the ancient marriage with the heiress of the Berkeleys.

But Margaret's thoughts never dwelt upon these things; her whole devotion was fixed upon the memory of her sainted brother, and her desire to execute his injunctions. She trusted that the part of the property of which she could not be defeated, would not only be sufficient for her own humbled wishes, but would enable her to make some provision for Huntley, if necessary.

Her abode was now an house of mourning: her father and her uncle

were both dying. But in what different manners! The lamp of life was calmly and gradually decaying in the bosom of her excellent father. In Sir Ambrose, it was working out its exit by violence, in horrid convulsions.

An intervening day was thus past. Sir Ambrose recovered a little strength. The next morning Huntley was again called to his bed-side.

"My dear Huntley," he began, "I have more to tell you of the sad story which I left off so abruptly. My dear Elfred, from the day that I ruined her, grew still more unalterably wretched. My flatteries, all that I could show of real kindness (for I most unfeignedly loved her), could make no impression upon her. Sylvana's attentions were scarcely heeded. The sorrow of her heart began to destroy her health and endanger her life. Providence interfered for a little while, and miraculously prolonged it." Here he was convulsed.

In a few minutes he struggled for utterance. "My dear boy," he exclaimed almost inarticulately, "I am wasting my time in words, when it seems as if I had no time to spare. I have a deed to do before I die, and I perceive that it must not be delayed. Bring me a sheet of paper, and a pen and ink, and let me try if this feeble hand can scratch a few words, sufficient to do my utmost towards making that provision for you which my last duty demands. Call in three of the most trusty of the servants, and let them be witnesses."

Huntley obeyed. The paper was spread before him on a light desk. He endeavoured to grasp the pen, but his trembling hand could not retain it. He struggled again, and conveyed it to the paper: it would not obey his command, nor make a single legible letter. "O!" he cried, "the hand of death is indeed upon me! If I am not better, I must

leave this work undone. God in his mercy forgive me!"

Huntley had retired from the room. The servants related to him what had passed. They said that the pangs of dissolution were apparently making rapid progress upon Sir Ambrose, and that they thought that he had not above a day or two to live.

Huntley did not cease to watch over him. He was still sensible; but his speech began at times to fail him. Towards evening he fell into a calm sleep, and passed the night so much better, that in the morning Huntley began to flatter himself that a turn in his disorder had taken place. His power of articulation had returned.

"I have told you," said he, "much of the story of Elfred; but there is still more of it which I wish you should know before I die. I told you that Providence had interfered for a time to delay the death of this beloved woman. She found

herself in a situation which made her, even herself, wish to prolong it for a few months. She felt that if she wished a termination to her own existence, she had no right over that of others not yet born.

"She confided many of her sentiments to Sylvana, to whom, in the agonies of despair, she complained of the expectation of giving birth to a child who might reproach her with its illegitimacy.

"Sylvana, whose wits were always working to soothe the feelings of Elfred, used all her influence with those whom she had captivated to persuade me to marry this highly-injured woman, to whom I could make no other reparation; and who, though she was sincere in her professions of abhorrence to me, was now willing to submit to this ceremony, for the sake of her future child. She said it mattered not to herself, for she had a certain presage that she should not long outlive its birth.

"To this request, urged to me by Sylvana's means, I obstinately and hardly refused to assent. One of the most solemn vows I had ever made, confirmed by imprecations of the most dreadful curses upon me if I broke it, was never to marry. It was the vow of our fraternity.

"Sylvana still persisted in her scheme. Elfred made this request, and only this. In Sylvana's sincere opinion, no other alleviation could prolong her life, even for a little while. At length I seemed to yield. With my habitual falsehood and wickedness, I resolved to arrange a pretended ceremony of marriage, in which one of my own companions, in the disguise of a priest, should perform the service. Sylvana said that she herself would content herself with this compromise; for as her principal object was to tranquillise Elfred's mind, this deception might perhaps have that effect. She pointed out Richard Greene, one of the

household, over whom she had most influence, as well calculated, from the confidence she could put in him, and from his adroitness at disguises, to act the priest.

"Huntley! is it possible that I can be forgiven by you, when I confess to you that I suffered this mock ceremony to take place; and that I thus added another degree of aggravation to my inexpressible criminality towards the angelic Elfred? O! my whole brain is on fire at the recollection of this turpitude! O, that this confession could wipe out the stain! How shall I go on? You look ghastly, Huntley. You perceive that all is not yet out. You add to my terrors. Do not look so frightfully at me! Spare! spare me!" He shrieked out; fell back; and expired.

Thus sunk the Greys to their tombs, one after another. Huntley was left without a protector, without a shilling of property, and with no certainty even

who was his father. Sir Ambrose was taken off before he could make a will, and before even he could tell the whole of a story, in which it seemed as if Huntley's own fate might be involved.

CHAP. XIII.

RETURN OF HUNTLEY TO CHEEVELY.—VISITS ALICE BERKELEY.—ALICE'S NARRATIVE OF HER DISAPPEARANCE.

THE funeral of Sir Ambrose was attended by very opposite feelings to those which followed his nephew Giles to the grave. A simple memorial was afterwards placed against the wall of the chapel, to record his name, his station, and the date of his death. His body was removed, at his own particular request, found in a memorandum-paper in his pocket-book, to *Hellingsley*, to be buried in the same grave with *Elfred*. In that church there yet remains a mural monument for him, erected many years afterwards by Huntley.

Huntley could now no longer endure

the gloom and the recollections of Wolstenholme. He retired to the tranquillity of that place which had witnessed the happy days of his childhood. The vicar of Cheevely received him with his usual benignity.

He related to the vicar much of what had passed at Wolstenholme. He yet did not think himself entitled to repeat what Sir Ambrose had confidentially related to him of *Hellingsley*. He was impatient to visit the Rectory, having received the grateful intelligence that Alice was much recovered.

As he passed the next morning from Cheeveley to obtain this long-wished interview, he could not avoid reflecting what a multitude of strange events he had passed through, since only at the distance of three or four years he was accustomed to traverse that path to the Rectory in his first youth.

He had then no distinct prospects before him; but he had never known mis-

fortunes; and the new joys of commencing love were sufficient to stand in lieu of the past and the future. He then had seen Alice Berkeley in the earliest bloom of her form, so delicate that she seemed almost to shrink from the visiting of the vernal breeze; placid, except with the tremblings of first hope; unconscious, amid the luxury of exquisite existence of her family misfortunes, and untouched by a grief of her own. The air, the verdure, and the flowers; the songs of birds, and the murmurs of the leaves, were all enjoyments to her. Her morning rambles were full of delight, and her books of an evening confirmed the tranquil certainty of bliss, which the visions of the morning had bestowed.

If Providence did not in its beneficence thus hide from us the evils of the future, how would our fortitude be able to support life? Could any one have guessed that in his own case so many extraordinary events could have been

crowded into so short a time? Could any one have believed that Alice would have had to encounter the imprisonment of her father, the exposure of her own person and life to a lawless banditti, captivity, miraculous escape, fever, loss of reason, and the jaws of death?

Nor was the dreadful interval on which he had to look back, the whole of the terrible contemplations which oppressed him. The future perhaps was yet darker than the past. He could see no clue by which this chaos of troubles was to be pierced. In the tremendous clouds of blackness that were before him, there was scarce the break of a glimmering ray.

He found Alice pale, weak, and embarrassed. She was deeply affected at seeing him. They both sat silent after the first address. After this pause, finding the continuance of silence too distressing, she said, "We have both had strange disasters since we last met, Huntley."

"So strange," he answered, "that to think of them makes me dizzy; but I am grateful to heaven to see you thus again, even pale as you are."

"You have had great losses, too, at Wolstenholme, I understand," she continued.

The tears trickled down Huntley's cheeks.

"They have indeed been very, very severe," he replied. "So severe, that I have hardly strength of spirits enough to talk of them."

"My young and faithful companion," proceeded Alice, "has had an heart-breaking loss, too."

"Ah! poor thing," rejoined Huntley, "it is cruel enough! but oh! would to God, that the loss of that excellent sainted being were confined to her! The county, the very nation mourns to the heart, the loss of that excellent and inimitable young man!"

"So we hear, Huntley, even in the

midst of the prejudices in which we live. The House of Berkeley itself does justice to the lamented character of Giles Grey."

In the tender animation of this eulogy, the countenance of Alice approached to its former beautiful glow; such as it used to be in her days of health and happiness.

"Generous Alice," exclaimed Huntley, "always generous in health, and in sickness, and sorrow, how would his spirit be soothed by such praise from your lips! Perhaps he watches over us, and may yet contribute to our future peace!"

Huntley was impatient to learn from Alice's own lips something of her late disaster; but his delicacy restrained him from commencing the subject. She seemed willing, occasionally, to allude to it, but she gave no connected narrative. Huntley, after the stories told him by Sir Ambrose, was prepared for any extent of intended outrage; and was not without his secret dreads, that the person of

Alice had been exposed to affronts, which his high and almost excessive regard to purity, would deem fatal to his own future happiness.

Alice was sagacious enough to catch a glimpse of what was passing in the mind of Huntley.

" You must justly wonder," she said, " that I say so little of the disastrous events which have occurred to me since we last met. My spirits are not yet strong enough for such a relation; but I have begun to write down a few notes on the subject, which, when I have finished them, you shall have to read."

Huntley could not be so unjust, as not to express himself content with this; but, in truth, his heart was not really perfectly at ease. The remembrance of Browne still haunted his mind; and it came the stronger upon him, because it had seemed to him, that Alice had studiously avoided to mention him.

He returned to Cheeveley; he endea-

voured to engage the Vicar in conversations, by which he might sift his mind. The understanding of the Vicar was, in fact, completely stunned by all the stories that he had lately heard. Through his life, Sir Ambrose Grey had been to him a mysterious character. To himself, Sir Ambrose had been always kind; but he carried that air of a domineering temper so far, and the confidence in himself so added to the native readiness of his talents, that he kept the Vicar in a degree of awe, which dazzled him away from too sharp a scrutiny. He always considered Huntley as his natural son; and from Sir Ambrose he received his salary as Huntley's tutor.

When Huntley related the circumstance of the non-completion of his will, arrested by the hand of death, the Vicar could not refrain from expressing his regret at this failure; because, though Lord Grey, on whom the property would devolve, might be safely trusted to make restitution to Huntley, if not rendered

imbecile by age, yet, under the circumstances, he was *non-compos* of such a disposition.

" And what will become of the poor old *Hall of Hellingsley*," said he, " that we have so many years looked down upon from these windows? Ah! Huntley, how fondly have I hoped to see you some day the master of that old mansion! The very rooks seem now to be crying out for a master. Hark, with what more than ordinary mournful tones they are disturbing the air! How they wheel their flights with more than usual tumult and agitation!"

Huntley turned pale.

" That sad house," said he, " is the constant torment of my mind; the fire, perhaps, cannot purify its stains; the sword cannot avenge them. The ghosts of guilty pleasures shall hover over that accursed village for centuries; and the affrighted inhabitants shall hear their shrieks of a night, and behold them ho-

vering over the graves by the troubled light of the moon."

The Vicar stared and trembled; he thought a sudden frenzy had seized Huntley; but he recollected, that among the numerous floating reports, it had been supposed that Alice had been carried to *the Hall of Hellingsley*, and carried by Browne. Browne's flight had afforded a strong confirmation of his guilt. When the Vicar combined this with the fact of the duel, he had no doubt that a spice of jealousy lurked in Huntley's mind.

When Huntley called on Alice the next day, she gave him the notes she promised; they were in the following words:

"In the dreadful disaster which lately beset me, I was so repeatedly overcome by terror, that I shall be often unable to give a connected account of this cruel affair.

"I was taking one of my morning rambles along the *Bringhurst* meadows,

and across the *Broomfield* lane, when I saw a party of gypsies under a tent, at a little distance, and among the rest I distinguished the figure of *Sim.* I crossed the style, and ran; for you know I always had a horror of *Sim.* Some of the party, I suppose, ran round the opposite way, for they met me at the next style. I was instantly surrounded by them. They pinioned my arms, and when I shrieked, they forced my cloak into my mouth.

"I believe I fainted; for I remember no more, till I found myself stretched on a bed in a strange chamber, with little light; the windows barred with iron, and the walls hung with a frightful, dreary, old-fashioned tapestry. I heard a sort of noisy roar of merriment in some other part of the house, and the movement and talking of women along the passage, that seemed to lead to my apartment. Then I heard the singing of female voices, and, among the rest, was a wild mournful

note, that sometimes seemed to change its measure suddenly and franticly; and then I heard another voice cry, *Hush, hush!* and it instantly stopped.

"Soon afterwards, there entered my room a young woman, who had an affected air of gaiety in her face, and who asked me if she could be of any service to me. I had scarcely recovered my senses, when she asked me this question. 'Where am I?' I asked, 'for God's sake where am I?' She answered, 'In safety; make yourself easy.' 'O Heaven!' I exclaimed, 'How did I escape from those dreadful gypsies?' 'Good people rescued you,' she said, 'make yourself tranquil here.' 'But why not convey me back to the Rectory? Why not send for my uncle and aunt Barney?' 'They must be distant from hence; we do not know their names.' 'O! send for them, if I am too weak to travel; send for them; I will give you the direction;'—and then I felt a strange effect of my

fright; I could neither recollect their names, nor the place of their residence; I struggled, and struggled, and still the names would not come; and then I fell into an agony of tears, and my senses again left me.

"I do not think that I was sensible any more that evening. The next thing I remember, which perhaps was the following morning, was, that the same young woman, when I opened my eyes, stood at the foot of the bed. At first I looked confusedly upon her; I could not recollect where I had seen her face. I thought I saw, behind her, partly hid by the curtain, the countenances of three more girls, still younger, who seemed to me to be staring and laughing at me. I cried, 'Who's there? who's there?' and began to scream. The girl said, 'Calm yourself, you must be dreaming, or you are light-headed.' But I plainly heard the titter of the girls, and their footsteps, as they retreated back out of the room.

" I still was conscious that my senses were flighty; and the dreadful idea entered my head, that I had got into a private madhouse. There was no want of attendance or accommodation, and changes of elegant dress were fully supplied to me.

" When I was left alone, I rose from my bed, and dressed myself, as far as my feeble strength would allow me, that I might explore the room, and see if I could discover any means of escape. I could not reach the window without ascending a chair; but here all exit was perfectly barred. The narrow panes of glass, the iron, and the stone mullions, would but imperfectly let me see the objects without. I strove to make out some particular designation; for still I had a half-formed idea of a desire to discover some mark of future identity. It seemed to me, as if the window looked into an old quadrangular court, in the centre of which was a dial, with what I

should have called scrolled gables, two on each side of the court. It seemed to be, as if on the side opposite my window was a large shield of arms sculptured in stone; and I was struck with the appearance of a singular bearing, as if of *a Serpent twined round the neck and wings of an Eagle.*

"I was so weakened by this effort, that I was obliged again to return to my bed; and there I again sunk into a delirium. During the next day all was such confusion to me, that I cannot recall, distinctly, a single circumstance. I have imperfect ideas of repeated conversations with the woman who first waited on me, imploring her interference to get me conveyed home; but I was so weak, that I was unable to rise from my bed. Another day, also, I believe must have passed in the same manner.

"It was, I remember, of an evening, for it was nearly dusk, that I waked with some recovery of my senses. I heard the low tone of voices in deep discussion,

not far from me. I listened, almost breathless. I looked, and thought I saw a line of light come slantingly along the floor, from below the tapestry opposite to my bed. I listened again, and the voices came in that direction. I then could make out, by degrees, something like the following dialogue, apparently in a male and female voice.

Man. Am I to run these hazards for nothing?

Woman. That is the consequence of entering into mad schemes.

Man. You always call my schemes mad.

Woman. I call them what they are; not only mad, but abominably wicked.

Man. You are very free-spoken.

Woman. You make me so; and you shall not tie my tongue.

Man. I wish I could tie your hands, and put you where you ought to be; behind the fire.

Woman. I have too many protectors

for that, master; I do not doubt your will.

Man. You pursue me; you dog my steps; you will not let me to myself.

Woman. So I always will, when you are at mischief.

Man. Do you not think yourself lucky, then, that I have not put you down a well; or left you carrion for the crows?

Woman. The devil stays your hand; he would not have you hanged yet.

Man. If I were not used to the licence of your tongue, and did not think you speak in sport, the devil himself should not stay my hand now. But to our purpose.

Woman. What purpose?

Man. Do not give me such an arch frown; you know, well enough, what purpose.

Woman. Hear me, monster! You shall as soon do that deed as pluck the moon from the sky!

Man. Well, but I have plucked many stars from the Heaven.

Woman. Yes, devil; Providence, it seems, allows imps like you, to escape from below for such purposes; but you shall not pluck this star.

Man. How came you, then, cunning one, to let me do what I have done?

Woman. You escaped my vigilance for once. Alas! you did it once before. Never again shall you do it.

Man. Come now, Mrs. Conscience, you know I have but a little time to stay, and let me make good use of it.

Woman. Like yourself. If you pay the punishment, you think you cannot have too much of the wickedness.

Man. Punishment, forsooth; they cannot punish *me*, the drivellers. France, Flanders, Italy; why they are but countries for fresh game: Variety is my passion.

Woman. Destruction of innocence; joy in human misery is your passion, Satan!

" At these words horror came over me; and I believe I uttered a shriek. The persons seemed to be alarmed, and the conversation ceased. In a few minutes, a female entered my room by the regular door. She was a well-dressed, handsome woman, towards forty, with a fine dark, expressive countenance. She held a candle in her hand, as she came to the bottom of my bed; and in a benign voice said to me, 'Are you ill, young lady — can I be of any service to you?' 'Tell me where I am,' said I; and why I am kept here.' 'Make yourself easy,' she answered; 'all will be well; I will be your tutelar saint.' I was comforted. 'You seem to have the countenance of a tutelar being,' I cried. 'O! in mercy, do not deceive me!' She frowned a little. 'You must not doubt me,' she answered. 'O! I will not doubt you; help me, comfort me!' I replied.

" Her countenance resumed its benignity. 'We all have our troubles,' she

said; 'evil and good is in the world; they are in constant struggle with each other; they are in opposite persons; they are in the same persons. Our only hope is in working out evil by good. Fate rules some of our actions; we can conquer fate by others which are in our power.'

"I looked at her; I imagined that I perceived something above human in this mysterious speech. There was a glow in her eyes, but it chastised itself, as I looked. 'You seem to listen to me as if I were a witch,' continued she; 'I am no witch; but I have heard of witches and devils too.' I thought she spoke sharply; I trembled. 'Do not fear me,' she cried, 'I once more assure you, that I am your friend.' I lifted my hands, and exclaimed, 'You will have mercy, then! I have need of mercy! speak to me words of consolation! It soothes me to hear a voice so suited to kindness.'

"Her face again blazed into a ma-

jestic expression. 'It is hope,' she cried, 'which leads us on; it is fortitude, and the buoyancy of high thoughts. The tranquil, the easy, the idle, and the fortunate; what are they? the glory, and the virtue are not with *them*. To be good in the midst of dangers; to be good in spite of temptation; to redeem evil by deeds of brilliant merit: these are the trials to which the prize is allotted. Mourn not, fair lady, whose face and form bespeak thee of illustrious birth, that thou art now amid nameless strangers, in a nameless house, of an uninviting, and perhaps dreary and frightful aspect; there are deeds that cannot be told; there are mysteries that cannot be revealed!'

'You gaze upon me.' She went on: 'You may gaze safely, there is no mischief in me, though my course has been a strange one; and my life has been as wild as that of the roe of the mountains.' The idea of the house for insanity recurred to me; the woman had such a wan-

dering look, and her words seemed so eccentric; but she apparently loved to talk, and I had no power to silence her, if I would. She went on:

'You have had a bad time of it, it seems, since you left your home. Ah! there are snares for us all. Who is always on the watch? And so you walked out, and those vagabond gypsies laid hold of you. Wild, wicked rogues! and idle, wanton sluts of girls! Why you ought to bless this house, and these walls, for your protection. You have been rescued from the fangs of relentless profligacy; and, God willing, you shall yet pass through the fire unhurt. The hills and the vallies and the woodlands, and the green fields, and the lone dells have seen us; and they shall see us again.'

"A bugle at that moment struck up a shrill blast within the walls of the court, as it seemed; and a stentorian voice cried, '*To horse, lads of the black belt, to horse! the yellow-stringed trumpet is in*

the forest; the bell of the red cap gingles: — away!'

"The woman started; she leaped to the window, and gazed eagerly through it. The trampling of horses was heard. '*Haste!* a voice cried, in a lower tone, *haste! the trumpet sounds again! it approaches! away, lads, away!'* Then the horses moved, and the sound as of a draw-bridge uplifted and then falling again, was heard.

"The woman had kept silent from the time of her moving to the window, till that moment. Then she jumped from the chair, dropped upon her knees, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes exclaimed, 'Gracious Heaven! and thou art gone at last; thou, the torment of my life, whose unwearied wickedness would never allow me repose; whose steps I have followed to avert thy mischiefs, till my heart ached, and my legs failed to carry me. I had a spell upon

thee, thou wretch, or thou hadst strangled me years ago!'

"I heard all with terror; I suppose I swooned, for I remember no more. I have an idea of a burning fever in the night, and of all sorts of tormenting visions on my brain.

"From that time, till the moment at which, on the return of my senses, I found myself safe in my own apartment, at this dear Rectory, I can give no account."

CHAP. XIV.

HUNTLEY GAINS ENTRANCE INTO THE HALL OF HELLINGSLEY. — RELATION OF WHAT OCCURS TO HIM.

THIS narrative left no doubt in the mind of Huntley, that Browne was the guilty person; and he had too much reason to fear that the *Hall of Hellingsley* was the scene of this outrage.

The fate of this old mansion had seemed in suspence since the death of Sir Ambrose. Lord Grey had been too feeble to give any orders about it. It had been observed in the village, that the movements and sounds about it grew every day less and less; and the numerous retinue that there had been reason to believe had hitherto inhabited it, seemed very much lessened.

Huntley was in the greatest doubt and uneasiness how to act. He wandered about, wrapt in thought, between Cheeveley and the Rectory, all day long. The dusk sometimes came on before he had ended these rambles.

It was at this period of a long walk, that he encountered his old acquaintance, *Kate the Gypsy*, about a mile from Cheeveley.

"Ha! brave young man," she cried, "we are met again in a good hour."

Her countenance glowed; but a tear stood in her eye. "Many's the day since we met," she went on, "and many's the portentous deed that has since occurred." "Ah Kate!" he answered, "Death has been busy among us." "Death, indeed," said she; "death and outrage!" "We have lost friends, Kate." "Ah, in sooth, Harry Huntley, have we! Sir Ambrose, Sir Ambrose! we could have better spared a better man." "What does *the Hall* for him now, Kate?" "It mourns

him, Harry Huntley, through all its courts and passages; the very dogs howl, and the rooks brawl for him! And all these wide forests and woodlands, are they not silent and gloomy for the loss of Him? The echoes of Rhynsdale Fall, and of the hanging slopes of Claverdingle mourn him also by their solemn silence! Yet, Harry Huntley, be of good cheer; thy sun shall yet shine; and perhaps the clouds may disperse from the mourning walls of *Hellingsley!*"

"Perhaps," said Huntley, "thou hast the spirit of divination, Kate; and canst tell me the secrets and mysteries that have passed within those evil-spoken walls?" "Evil has been spoken, and evil has been done," she answered; "but good shall come out of evil." — "You talk darkly, Kate," he replied. "Darkly, but not without meaning, Harry Huntley." — "It is a meaning, without a clue to me, Kate." "When the curfew tolls, Harry, and the blood-hound bays the moon, and the bugle echoes from the

dell of Coverley, try thy ways, and the drawbridge of Hellingsley shall let thee pass!" — "Kate, thou art a good spirit! never yet didst thou lead me to mischief. I will obey!" "Peace and happiness go with thee, Harry Huntley, we may yet meet in a happier hour!"

She kissed his hand, even with grace; and stalked away, humming a song.

Huntley, as he returned home, reflected deeply on what had passed. He was not superstitious; but there was something very extraordinary in the character and conduct of Kate; there was something about her, that had really the appearance of divination. Her present advice concurred with the impulses of his own mind. He had an irresistible desire to explore the recesses of *Hellingsley*. Its mysteries had been, from a boy, the sources of disquiet to him; and the late disaster to Alice had increased his curiosity tenfold.

On the following evening, at the time of tolling the curfew, he listened for the

signals; but he heard them not. Another day of anxious and trembling suspense was passed. On that evening, when the curfew ended its sound, the moon shone bright, and the baying of a deep-mouthed dog was heard from the valley, and a bugle gave a shrill blast from the direction of the dell of Coverley. "Now," cried Huntley, "is my hour! I obey the voice of fate!"

It required all his fortitude to support him, as he descended from Cheeveley into the village of Hellingsley. Sometimes he was inclined to turn back, and sometimes he imagined he saw spectres on his road.

As he glided along the village as silently as he could, he fancied that the villagers watched and mocked at him.

He approached the avenue: the dogs bayed; all else was a fearful silence. He summoned up his utmost courage, and went on: his heart beat at every step he took. When he came within a

yard of the drawbridge, he saw by the light of the moon that it was drawn up. In an instant it descended: he rushed across it; the bridge fell, — the portal closed.

He looked around him: he saw by the moon that he was in a spacious court. A hoary-headed old man came up to him. "You are welcome, Sir," he cried: "we have lost our old master, and have not yet found a new one! It seems as if you were he!" He sighed, and then he lifted up his lantern; and, catching the countenance of Huntley, exclaimed, "Ah, Sir! poor Sir Ambrose! he is gone to his grave before his time! We had looked to his completing, at least, his eightieth year, — hale as he was, and never a day's illness in his life till his last attack! But though he is gone, he has left his likeness behind him; for, young as you are, good Sir, you are his very counterpart; and a handsome man he was, and a gallant one!"

Huntley was too deeply agitated to attend much to this old man's talkativeness. He proceeded into the Hall, across the court, up some steps through a passage parted off by screens. A few glimmering lamps had been placed down the sides of the Hall. It was of the fashion of an older and ruder day, hung with all sorts of armour, and all the implements and appendages of the sportsman.

The old man took a candle, which stood at the foot of the long oak table that ran down the Hall, and said, "Will you please to step this way, Sir? I was ordered, if a person of your description should come, to carry him up to Sir Ambrose's library, above stairs." Huntley followed, scarcely knowing what he did.

The room was gloomy; but there was a good fire, and candles were placed on the writing-table. Huntley said to himself, "What can this mean? Is it a snare to murder me!" He called back his courage: he recollected what Kate

had told him, and he had some faith in her. He resolved to abide this trial: perhaps his fate might depend on its development.

He was exhausted: he set himself down in a chair. All was frightful and unbroken silence. "Where is this rumoured roar of mirth?" said he. "Where are these orgies that used to disturb the midnight air? Has the grave swallowed all their votaries? Or have the barbarous shores of Virginia taken them into their bosom?

Papers lay scattered on the table,—account-books, and receipted bills; and Sir Ambrose's sturdy writing lay mixed in fragments with them. There was a diary of his sports; lists of game killed, and catalogues of the names of his hounds. A volume of *Turberville* lay open, scored in an hundred places; and *Gervase Markham*'s various volumes were scattered plentifully round about.

Astley's * celebrated (but now forgotten) *Book on Horsemanship* seemed to have been the last book he had been reading.

In a corner stood a locked iron box, titled, *Deeds of Hellingsley Hall.* Round the shelves were ranged a few splendidly bound volumes, principally Genealogical and Historical.

At length, he heard footseps advancing: his heart beat, and his courage almost failed him. The door opened, and a female entered the room. Huntley rose. "Be not alarmed, Sir!" said she; "a friend addresses you!" The voice was mellow and sweet-toned, but solemn; the figure was tall and majestic, and the look awfully expressive. "We are met to-night," said she, "to talk of grave and mysterious affairs!"

* Let not wiseacres think this was the late equestrian of the name. He was a man of the court, of noble family, Master of the Jewel Office to Queen Elizabeth, who married a *Grey*, and died 1601. The book is now one of the rarest, *perhaps the rarest* in English literature. It was esteemed in its day for its high *literary merit*.

Huntley summoned up all his resolution to be calm. He answered, "I am prepared to attend, Madam! I came here to satisfy my curiosity."—"Be patient," she replied, "and probably it will be gratified." She went on:

"Sir Ambrose Grey, then, is dead, and you helped to close his eyes. Peace be to his soul! He has much to answer for! Do you stare at this from me, who am an inmate of his house? Alas! I was at first a most unwilling inmate. I believe it may be two-and-twenty years, or thereabouts, that I have lived here, and never did any one encounter so many strange adventures. When I was brought hither by violence, without the power to escape, my destiny was sealed. I have lived here in the midst of evil, endeavouring to redeem such faults as I may have committed, by the incessant effort to perform high services in the midst of temptations, obloquies, and dangers. You love the Lady Alice Berkeley?"

Huntley expressed assent by the agitation of his countenance.

"Did you ever hear Sir Ambrose name another fair female of this family?"

Huntley grew pale: his whole frame was almost convulsed.

"I see you have heard of her."

She went on: "You have heard, then, of Elfred Berkeley. Her death was the only sorrow that ever touched the heart of Sir Ambrose Grey."

"I also knew the dear departed saint, and I would have kept her in this world if I could. I have done all I could for him she left behind."

Huntley almost fell from his chair. "Did she leave a son behind her, then?" he cried, scarce articulating.

"She did leave a son! but if you will hear about him, you must command your patience and your fortitude. I must tell my tale in my own way, or it will expire in my bosom."

Huntley, thus warned, resolved not to interrupt her.

"What is a son whom a mother cannot own, and a father must conceal, lest he should be an evidence of his crimes?—Bearing, perhaps, a name to which he has no alliance, and domesticated with those by whom he is considered as an outcast! To see estates and honours pass over him from his nearest blood to his remote relations?—What is the father, who, for a rash and wicked vow or profligate selfishness, will commit this injustice upon the posterity who are entitled to his protection?

"The world is but a wilderness of vice and folly; and fraud, and perfidy, and selfishness, are too often successful. Luckily they are not always successful: the deceiver cannot always secure himself from deception. But what is the Lord Grey about? Why sends he not to take possession of the *Hall of Helling-*

ley? Does he suspect the existence, or doubt the illegitimacy of this issue? Or is he careless on the verge of approaching death, and indifferent as to property and honours about to descend on a remote and obscure relation?

"Perhaps I have a tale to tell him that would delight him, if he yet has a memory for the affairs of this world. But yet it is involved in doubts and difficulties; and I am not sure that the hope falsely raised is not worse than quiet despair.

"What saw you at Wolstenholme to envy in rank and honours and a great name? Even when united with virtue, talent, and love, and esteem, and renown, they were not happy. Even the excellent Giles Grey died in the prime of youth, a prey to grief and disease. Thy fate has been opposite, Huntley, the child of difficulty, and obscurity, and struggles for life! Yet canst thou say truly, that, on the whole, thou hast been

less happy? There is a vigour which opposition and necessity of exertion only can produce; a command of mind which luxury and ease never yet reached."

"And what have you heard of Elfred Berkeley?"

She went on.—"Has Sir Ambrose told you that he was married to her?"

"He has not told me exactly that," answered Huntley, in deep agitation.

"He has told you, then, that he made her believe that a proper marriage ceremony passed between them?"

"To that effect, certainly."

"And so she died comforted by a wild deception, did she?"

"Alas! Sir Ambrose died before he could proceed so far?"

"Thou, Huntley, cruelly used, yet not ruined; Huntley! thou hast much still to learn."

"Did you hear of a girl faithfully devoted to the service of the last unhappy

days of Elfred, who was brought by force for the purpose from the domains of Hardingville?"

"I heard of an excellent being, who answered that description."

"Here, then, Huntley, you see that person; — not excellent, but devoted to the house of Berkeley, and striving to redeem the faults which she could hardly avoid falling into, by incessant attempts to do as much good and avert as much wickedness as she can."

Huntley, full of a mixture of awe and gratitude, burst into tears; fell on his knees before her; kissed her hand, and exclaimed, "Protecting angel! I half anticipate your ministering goodness!"

"Restrain your expectations," she cried; "you can yet guess little what I have to say. Know, then, that Elfred Berkeley had a son, and that I helped to nurse him, poor babe! He had scarcely lived but for me; for his mother died

the fifth day after his birth. I saw her deposited under a false name, dear angel! in the grave of yonder church; and how many hundred times since have I wept on that spot over her remains!

"The boy grew; but before he had completed his third year, was sent far away from *Hellingsley*. Years passed before I saw him again, and then he did not know me. My life depended on my concealment of myself from him; and a difficult life I had.

"I soon discovered that my lot was cast: my reputation in other society was gone for ever. Who would have believed that a female could have come back unspotted from the *Hall of Hellingsley?* In truth, for a long while I could not have escaped on any terms; and when I could have escaped, I could never have lived securely elsewhere.

"I had to reconcile myself to this course of life as I could. Nature had given me a daring and adventurous spi-

rit, and the men, in their flattery, said that my person and my manners were pleasing to them. I used what powers of pleasing I had, as you will learn in the sequel, to forward the service to which I had devoted myself.

"I cannot detail now the strange particulars of my subsequent days. I have lived a witness to such alternations of mad and vicious joviality, and horrible sorrow and suffering, as would freeze your blood, and make your hair stand on end.

"The woods and the fields have been almost my only resource and comfort. I have frequented them in every disguise, and seen a forest life in all its varieties. There is no mansion in the neighbourhood in whose hall I have not frequently introduced myself; no family story that I have not heard; no lady's love intrigue that has not been communicated to me. My mind was naturally active; and I could only keep up my

spirits by having some enterprise in which to engage it. Many a love-match I have promoted, and many a one have I defeated.

" It was my delight to bear with hardihood the stir of the elements; to be braced by the blowing winds; to drink the freshness of the morning dew; and to revive under the cool and balmy breezes of evening.

" How could I return from these sweet innocent scenes of nature to a house of intemperance and unfeeling vice? It was difficult to reconcile such inconsistencies; but I *did* reconcile them. My unconquerable spirit, I hope my overawing resolve to do what I could of right and generous, had obtained an ascendance in this mingled household, which, while it flattered my love of power, counteracted some part of the odiousness of the inevitable circumstances by which I was surrounded.

" I softened evils I could not prevent.

I have inspired the fortitude that made exile supportable, and consoled death by covering it with the mantle of innocence.

" Our companions were profligate, but not stupid. Some of them had in them the seeds of virtue and high ambition. They had seen the world in most of its varieties. Their conversation was animated and sagacious; their stories and anecdotes inexhaustible. The continual change of persons; the constant intercourse thus kept up with every part of the kingdom; the bustle and arrangement of new schemes; the very mystery, and all its solemnities and preparations, kept the mind always alive.

" We had a yearly book, in which the parties who had a turn for writing recorded many of their tales, or those which they had heard in their wanderings. It was called *The Dragon's Legend Book.*

I have preserved one of the volumes, and it shall one day be yours. Many of the leaves of these volumes were scribbled by me; and when I did not choose that my hand should be known, I always found some female in the house whose confidence I could command to write for me.

"This book was one of the instruments with which I worked. Many of our Knights of the Green Belt, audacious as they were, were incredibly superstitious. I have often deterred them from some wicked scheme by a seasonable story.

"Many a weary walk has been beguiled by contriving these sorts of fiction. I have spent days in imagining what I should write of evenings in the *Legend Book;* and all that I pick up calculated for this purpose was treasured in my mind, to be made use of when the occasion required.

"I read the stories written by others of our companions, not merely from curiosity, but often as clues to the momentary schemes of the writers."

CHAP. XV.

RELATION CONTINUED.

THE relator now paused. "Do I weary you?" she cried; "or are you willing still to listen, rather than defer having your curiosity gratified till another time?"

"Look at my countenance," said Huntley, "and judge if I am weary, or if I would willingly defer to hear whatever you will tell me."

She went on.

"You listen to my extraordinary history as if you thought that it involved your own! You are right, Huntley, it does involve a material part of yours. Examine my face more attentively, and say if you have not often seen it before? Recal the tones of my voice, and say if

this is the first time that they have met your ear. Knowest thou not *Kate the gypsey?* Thou now art listening to her tale. Kate has been often thy protector, when thou didst not suspect it. She has averted from thee the hand of the relentless assassin, and tracked thy footsteps to warn or defend thee. And now, rejoice at the declaration, that thou hast in me a living witness of thy birth! *Thou art, in truth, the son of Elfred Berkeley!"*

Huntley dropped on his knees on the floor, he clasped his hands, and cried, in an agony of gratitude,

"Gracious Heaven! how thankful I am to be the son of such a woman! and that woman, too, a Berkeley!"

He then rose to his chair; put his hand to his head; and seemed lost in a momentary reverie.

"Sylvana!" he cried; (for by that name Sir Ambrose had spoken of her), "O! would that the ceremony of mar-

riage had been legal, and then I should be happy indeed!"

"Huntley," she answered, "be not unreasonable; I did all I could to make it legal. But I have said enough for this night. Come again to-morrow evening, and I will relate the particulars of the ceremony."

Never did any one walk on air as Huntley did on his return back to Cheeveley. He could scarcely believe his memory and his senses! the certain son of Sir Ambrose Grey and Elfred Berkeley! the first cousin of Alice, even though illegitimate!

He considered with himself, whether he should communicate to his friend, the vicar, what had passed; and resolved, at length, to defer it at least till the conversation of the next day was over. Meantime he could not sleep; and his impatience was such that minutes seemed hours. He rose with the light, and endeavoured to appease his restlessness

by wandering into the air. As he came forth from the front door, he cast his eyes eagerly upon the valley; and the mist of night was breaking off from the lone tower of the *Hall of Hellingsley*; the rooks were already in motion, and directing their flight through the half-pierced dawn, towards the forest. The peasants of the village were up, and trudging towards their different tasks: the tinkling bells, and heavy grinding roll of one of the great travelling waggons, came faintly from the great forest track; and now and then the discharge of a lone gun from the thickets of the opposite slopes echoed across the valley.

He said to himself, "Thou wert at last, then, *Hellingsley*, the place of my nativity! With what mysterious feelings, all my life, have I beheld thee? But can I look back upon thee with exultation, when I reflect on the conduct of my father, and the sorrows of my mother? Can I glory in the proud blood of Grey,

when I dare not use the name? Then, Wolstenholme, thou, and thine ancient honours, are to pass from me by the same sad cruelty of behaviour as brought a broken heart and an early grave on my beloved mother! Thus it is that a Grey has always been a source of woe to a Berkeley; and in inflicting misfortune and disgrace on a Berkeley, see how at last he has ruined the name and succession of his own house."

Evening, long wished for, at length came. Huntley hurried to *the Hall.* He found his entrance as easy as before. Sylvana was already in the library.

"You have burned, I suppose," she said, "for the arrival of the moment when you could hear my narrative resumed. I must again call upon you for patience and calmness. Your curiosity and eagerness are natural; but you must not allow them to interrupt the course of my relation.

"Sir Ambrose has confessed to you, that he permitted a mock ceremony of marriage with your mother, to delude her into tranquillity. Did he tell you to whom he committed the management of that ceremony?"

"He told me," answered Huntley, "that Sylvana assisted in the arrangement of it."

"Did he tell you of a mock priest?"

"He did."

"Ah! that mock priest, Huntley! a deep story hangs by that mock priest! He has caused me many an heart-ache! But I have turned the heart-aches to account, you may be sure.

"*Richard Greene* had embarked himself in the fate and fortunes of Sir Ambrose Grey. He had been recommended as an adventurer with Sir Walter Raleigh in his last voyage; and when he came back, found his way into the retinue of Sir Ambrose. He had now approached the age of thirty. He was handsome, lively,

witty, romantic, and of a wild and unprincipled sensibility.

"I was little more than fifteen when I was first brought a captive to Hellingsley. He was pleased with my youthfulness, and chose to praise the brilliance of my brown complexion, and what he called my raven locks. I will not deny that I was pleased with *him*.

"By degrees he told me, in the last degree of confidence, his whole story, which he had concealed with the utmost care from Sir Ambrose. His real name was not *Greene*. He was the younger son of a nobleman, of a distinguished family, who had died without making much provision for his younger children. His real name was *Humphrey Bourchier*. He had been sent to the university of Oxford, where he was madly extravagant, and incurred all sorts of pecuniary difficulties. A generous friend of the family relieved him several times, without taking any obligation or acknowledgment

from him. At length, to repress him, he took bonds from him. The behaviour of Humphrey, in return for this friendship, was such as justly condemned him to obscurity and concealment for the remainder of his life. He intrigued with his friend's wife, and ran off with her.

"This did not happen till he was twenty-five or twenty-six years old. He had remained at Oxford till he had taken his two first degrees, because he had been intended for the church. He soon abandoned the lady he had carried off; and, in truth, she had not much reason to complain of this; for, however vile his conduct, she had still been much more to blame than himself.

"This history discovered to me traits in him, which I could never forgive; but the unaccountable simplicity with which he related it to me; the confidence he put in me; and a native eloquence and fascination of manner, lessened in my heart the revolting effects

of this story more than they ought to have done.

"The influence I had over him from the possession of this secret, added to the love he professed for me, made it instantly occur to me, when Sir Ambrose proposed the mock ceremony of marriage, that Greene was the properest instrument to be employed. Sir Ambrose only knew his early history, from the recommendation to Sir Walter Raleigh by a great nobleman, as the son of a yeoman-tenant of his who had been wild and extravagant, and had quitted his commission in the army from the pressure of his debts.

"But I had another reason, which I have not yet told. Calm the risings of your bosom, Huntley! do not change colour so! Do not look so eagerly and so wildly with those eyes of fire!

"I have said I had another reason, Huntley. Courage, now, my beloved and long-nursed son of Sir Ambrose

Grey! Courage to the heart, in whose veins the blood of Wolstenholme and Hardingville again unite! Hear, Huntley, this mighty reason! Humphrey Bourchier was really in holy orders, and had previously to his disgrace been regularly ordained a priest. I trust, therefore, that we may yet establish the legitimacy of your birth."

Huntley's expectations had been raised to the utmost. At these words, in the excess of his surprise, he fainted.

CHAP. XVI.

HUNTLEY'S RETURN TO THE VICARAGE FROM HELLINGSLEY.—HIS FEELINGS ON THE INFORMATION COMMUNICATED TO HIM AT THE HALL.—HIS VISIT TO ALICE.—HIS WALK AGAIN TO HELLINGSLEY.

WHEN Huntley recovered, Sylvana said to him, "You are not so firm-hearted as I had supposed, child of my affection! You are not yet prepared to hear the remainder of my story!"

"He answered, "I am prepared: I shall die if you keep me longer in suspense."

"Well, then," she went on, "I told you that Greene was really *a priest.*"

"But how shall we prove that? and how shall we prove the performance of the ceremony?" replied Huntley, eagerly.

"It is difficult," she observed, "but it is possible."

"Is Greene living?"

"I know not; but if he lives, you can scarcely have advantage of his testimony."

"Why not?"

"Recollect his situation; he must confess his name, his crimes, and expose himself to vengeance and ignominy."

"Then, perhaps," exclaimed Huntley, clasping his hands, "it had been better this discovery had never been made to me! It will be the torment of Tantalus! I shall die, while relief seems within my reach; and yet escapes me!"

"You are unreasonable, Huntley. Patience and hope may yet do much."

A tear dropped from Huntley's eye; a momentary convulsion shook his frame. He lifted again his dark countenance to Sylvana: her looks were grave and mortified. He fell on his knees before her; clasped her hand; and, hiding his face, wept aloud.

At length he recovered his voice. "Kindest of protectors!" he burst out, "it is only with the fulness of my heart, that I can thank you! I have no words that can express the gratitude which I feel. Do not misconstrue my eagerness, or suppose from it that I am not fully sensible of the extent of your unequalled kindness and generosity."

"Be calm, Huntley! think not of me! I only think of you! Having nursed and conducted you so far, I will shrink from no efforts to seat you in your rights. I will trudge bare-foot over the globe for you. Many a rough path have I already trudged bare-foot for you! I will seek out this Greene; and, if he is dead, I may gain testimony from those who have heard his declarations. Perhaps he has left a written record of the marriage. He promised me that he would, though I never could persuade him to trust it to my hands."

"Are there, then, beings," uttered

Huntley with fervour, "who, under the appearance of frail humanity, are ministering angels upon earth? There are, Sylvana! there must be! and you are one of them!"

"No flattery, Huntley! I am all frail humanity, be assured."

"Gratitude and admiration are not flattery, Sylvana!"

"Well, then, let us come to business," cried she. "Go home, and calm yourself, and reflect, and act coolly. I will take measures for a search after Greene. You shall hear from me soon, and frequently: I will never desert you while I have life!"

Huntley now parted from Sylvana with regret. He tore his burning hand from hers, and darted floods of unutterable gratitude from his dark and expressive countenance.

He walked slowly homeward to Cheeveley. What he had heard stunned him: he had scarcely any distinct and consistent ideas. He crept to bed on his ar-

rival at the vicarage, scarcely knowing what he did; and, through mere excess of fatigue, fell into a profound sleep. An accidental loud bark of the dogs waked him at midnight. A confused remembrance of what had passed at Hellingsley woke with him, and made him doubt where or who he was. He began to think that he had been dreaming, and that what had passed was not a reality.

By degrees his thoughts became calmer; and, then, when he had assured himself that all which was present to his memory had actually happened, he trembled at the sudden chance of so great a change in his fortune, and was overwhelmed with the fear that it could not last, and that a reverse must again ensue.

When he rose, he had not yet made up his mind, in what way, and how much of this intelligence, it would be prudent to communicate at present to the vicar.

His thoughts were more occupied with Alice. He now felt a double impatience to see her: but things were not yet ripe enough to make to her the disclosure of what he had learned.

After breakfast, he set off for the rectory. He found Alice wonderfully recovered. She received him with pleasure; yet with much agitation. He had not been many minutes in the room, when Alice observed something unusual in the expression of his countenance. It was altogether joyous; but not without deep passing clouds. And Alice was struck with lines in his face as if five years were added to his age.

Alice had standing on her table a petit cabinet of amber, in which she kept rings and other little ornaments. She opened one of the drawers to take out a small seal, as a present to Huntley. She had the custody of at least a dozen family seals, committed to her care by her father. As she took them up, Huntley

expressed a curiosity to look at some of them. He examined the arms and impalements, (for he was a good herald,) with eagerness.

Alice, willing to amuse him, unfolded her stores. She had nearly exhausted them, when she opened a drawer of miniatures.

"I have never had the courage," she said, "to look at these portraits, since several years back, the first object that met my eye was my mother's face, gazing mournfully on me, as I thought, and in tears. But you shall give me courage; and we will survey, together, the features and expressions of some of these unhappy Berkeleys!"

They were unclapsed, and the lids opened, one after another. Some exquisite productions of Holbein, and his early successors, made the eyes of Huntley dance with delight. He looked at Alice:

"Here are beauties," he cried, "my

lovely friend; but they are all eclipsed by you!"

"*My lovely friend!*" Alice blushed at these words, as they met her ear: she was not angry; but Huntley had never used sounds so nearly approaching to familiarity before.

The examination of the portraits went on. They came to one written on the outside, "*Old Sir Oliver Berkeley!*"

"My grandfather, I suppose," cried Alice; "but I do not remember having opened it."

Huntley's hands trembled as he drew back the clasp. The eyes of Alice were also directed to catch the first glimpse.

As the lid rose, Alice gave an involuntary start. She then cried, "Pray, Huntley, let me look more nearly at that face."

It was a youth of the age of not more than twenty-five, in the costume of the reign of Edward VI. She fixed her eyes eagerly upon it; for a few

minutes she was wrapped up in it. She then lifted her looks upon Huntley, and then returned them to the painting. "There is illusion in this!" she exclaimed "am I dreaming? have I my senses?"

Huntley was not much less surprised by these strange exclamations.

"Why, you have been playing magic with me, Huntley," she said: "you have found access to my cabinet, and been exchanging some of the portraits, to make me wonder."

Huntley smiled; but his smile was mixed with surprise at Alice's extraordinary suspicion. He asked what she could mean? with a gravity which showed that he did not understand her.

"Why, look at that face, Huntley; it must have been painted for yourself, under the disguise of an ancient costume."

"Be assured," said Huntley, smiling with delight, "it is *your* grandfather, Sir Oliver Berkeley."

"Then it is," cried she, "the most surprising coincidence that ever occurred."

Not so surprising, thought Huntley to himself; but he said nothing.

"Almost every feature is the same," continued Alice; "but even if I am mistaken in this, I cannot be mistaken in the effect of the general expression. In both of you, it is nearly identical."

"I am delighted at the discovery," answered Huntley; "to whom should I be so proud of being like as to those from whom you spring?"

"O, you deceive me, Huntley! It *must be* a trial of my credulity."

"Why should there be no accidental likenesses in the human face?" observed Huntley.

"Not *such* likenesses!" said Alice; "there is a family-likeness, which is quite different from every other. It does not consist in mere features, — and some-

times very little in features; but in a look, in an effect, which is indefinable; in something that comes and goes, — that you catch, and when you gaze again you cannot tell where you found it."

"Well, then," exclaimed Huntley, "I will presume to suppose myself related to the Berkeley family. Will it offend your pride, Alice?"

There was a smile of complacencey, mixed with a little agitation, in uttering these words.

Alice was again struck with a change in Huntley's manner; yet of a kind which she could not clearly designate. With all Huntley's spirit, there had been something hitherto in his behaviour which partook of a small mixture of awe at Alice's superior birth. This had now vanished.

Alice knew not what to answer. After a pause, she replied with an archness of tone, of which she struggled to increase

the appearance. "Would it not be more probable to suppose you nearly related to the Greys?"

"But may they not have been allied——"

"Yes; centuries ago. Such likenesses can scarcely come forth after centuries."

Huntley was unwilling, at present, to pursue this conversation any farther; he sunk into a profound silence; he passed the miniatures one by one through his hands; but he saw them not: the light of his eyes was turned inward.

Alice perceived it. "Does this likeness offend you, Huntley?" she asked.

"It delights and overcomes me," he answered.

Alice was appeased; the mellow, tender tone of his voice ran to her heart. A thought came over her that there were propitious mysteries in this occurrence, which might portend hereafter comfort and happiness to them both.

But still she could not, in all her agi-

tation, avoid remarking, that though there was in Huntley's expression an occasional look of hope and lofty expectation, which was new, yet it was crossed by clouds, which partook of a profound anxiety not less unprecedented in him.

She endeavoured to lead the conversation to Wolstenholme; but it succeeded very imperfectly. Rumours were abroad that Lord Grey was declining fast. Huntley shook his head: he told Alice that he feared there was a good deal of gloom and a good deal of confusion there.

"So," thought Alice, "the houses of Berkeley and Grey, after centuries of contest, are going out together! Where are my poor brothers? and, alas! where is the amiable and lamented heir of Grey?"

As the conversation now became interrupted, and each party appeared more disposed to ruminate than to talk, Huntley rose to take his leave. He said that he would bring Alice accounts of the present state of Wolstenholme in a few

days, if in the mean time he should not be sent for thither, or called away elsewhere.

In his walk homeward, his thoughts turned principally on Sylvana and Hellingsley. He reflected that much still remained to be done; and that it would yet be miraculous if he should succeed in proving his birthright. What probability was there, that if Green were dead he had left behind him the proper documents? or that if he had left such, they could now be found? or if found, verified? If Green were not dead, how, even though he could be traced, could his testimony be brought forward?

But the vigorous mind always hopes, even "though hope be lost." Sylvana was his anchor: Sylvana seemed to have been destined by Providence to carry him through his difficulties and perils. She had, perhaps, more reason for her confidence than she had yet explained. She was a woman of extraordinary shrewd-

ness,—acquainted with human life beyond what seemed possible in the sphere in which she had moved; and not likely, in the experience derived from a life of struggles and storms, to believe things were easy and practicable which were beset with obstacles and disappointments.

The Vicar perceived that something more than ordinarily important occupied his mind; but he had long accustomed himself to make no enquiries. He was *in a maze himself* about the mysteries regarding Huntley's fate; and had wearied himself with conjecture, till the subject had become too painful to him, and he could only find relief in driving it from his meditations.

Huntley, therefore, was left to his own musings. His head, his heart, and his eyes turned towards Hellingsley. He sat down to dinner; he ate little; visions swam before his sight; the intensity of his feelings rose to pain and high fever.

"I am myself, then," said he, "the heir of this noble house of Grey, who have brought me up, and to whom I have always looked with so much veneration and enthusiasm. I would not wish a prouder succession, were I but sure of making good my right. Ah! my kind, my beloved, my lost friend, Giles Grey! thou wouldst have rejoiced, on failure of thy own succession, to have had me the next collateral to take thy place. Thou wouldst have smoothed the path for me. Thy voice would have gone far to aid me in my future claims. Thy elder uncle lies on his death-bed, with decayed senses which cannot assist me. If I fail at last, perhaps it had been better that I had never known these claims."

The restlessness of these conflicting ideas would not allow him to remain in the house. He rose and strolled towards Hellingsley. He cast his eyes earnestly, as he caught a glimpse of the chimnies of *the Hall*: not a trace of smoke was

seen ascending from even one of the lonely chimnies; not a human voice was heard round it; not even the sound of an animal.

The superstitions of the villagers had not ceased: they made long circuits, rather than approach too near this haunted and interdicted spot.

Huntley descended into the village. As he passed by the scattered cottages, the inhabitants, especially the children, came to the door, and stared at him with a mute wonder, as if half afraid; yet incapable of suppressing their curiosity.

As they saw him descend the last path, which led exclusively to the Hall, some of them gave a shriek.

"Poor young gentleman!" at length exclaimed an old woman, holding up her hands; "he is certainly possessed! As sure as there ever was a sun in the sky, the ghost of old Sir Ambrose walks in that bewitched hall every night! ay, and a part of every day! I have heard

the loud crack of his whip along the gallery a hundred times; ah! and the shrieks of his poor wife too, as he puts her behind the blazing fire, as if she was living."

"Wife, mother," cried her son, "why Sir Ambrose had no wife." "I tell you he had, foolish boy," she answered; "ay, and perhaps half a dozen. All he had he killed though, as sure as there is a God to punish us; and the poor little innocent creatures that he defiled and ruined too. He was a devil upon earth, boy! and woe be to the village of Hellingsley that he will haunt for ages!"

"How dares young Squire Huntley to go there then?" said the son. "Is he not a spawn of the old breed?" cried the hag: he has a spell, perhaps, that saves him; and who knows but he may have been suckled by witches, and still loves the food that boils in their cauldrons. Witches live there still, I say, boy; and Squire Huntley may dance the hey with them there, of days and of nights too."

Luckily for Huntley, he heard not this frightful conversation. He advanced to the gate that opened upon the drawbridge; all was closed, and all was still, till a watch-dog, in an inner court, set up a roaring bay.

CHAP. XVII.

SIR OLIVER BERKELEY DIES. — HUNTLEY VISITS HARDINGVILLE. — SUSAN PEMBURY.

Huntley retired from this spot, knowing that to force an entrance was impossible; but circuited the mansion, in the hope of catching a glimpse of Sylvana. Almost every shutter was closed: no sign of human habitant was to be seen, or heard.

He resolved to return to the vicarage by a different path: the prying eyes and impertinent looks of the villagers were disagreeable to him.

When he reached his home, the Vicar asked him if he had heard the news. He anxiously answered,

"No."

"I have just had a note from Mr.

Barney," he said, "to inform me, that poor old Sir Oliver Berkeley is gone at last. He had for some time lingered quite insensible; and perhaps it was well for him, that he was in this state of insensibility, for he could have received nothing but discomfort if his mind had been open to impressions from without. It is a sad scene of confusion at Hardingville. Alice is in a stupor of grief. All the particulars of the mournful scene have been withheld from her; but her apprehensive fancy easily painted to her the whole."

"What is to become of Hardingville," cried Huntley.

"The eldest son probably will have it, when he can be found; but he has not been heard of, for the last two years. It is thought that the creditors cannot touch it. But they will make a great scramble to seize all they can, during his absence."

"My heart is rent," exclaimed Hunt-

ley, "at the fall of this family! first of all, for the sake of Alice, but, even if Alice were out of the question, I should deeply regret the ruin of such a family. All the years I have spent at Wolstenholme, all the prejudices and rivalities of the Greys, would not have extinguished this regret. There can be no adequate substitute in what is new. My little experience of mankind tells me, that a change is never for the better; that even when we disapprove the old, and have reason to disapprove them, they who take their places are always worse. Besides, whatever may be the attempts to decry honourable descent, of which the ingenuity of the mass of mankind is so interested in discovering the emptiness, it has attractions on the mind which no new merits of an individual can supply; attractions which are intertwined with the best powers of our intellectual and moral being."

"It was to himself," said the Vicar, "that the honourable station to which

Sir Oliver was born was not of much advantage."

"I am aware that it was not," replied Huntley: "it not infrequently happens so: he had bitternesses to encounter, from which, if he had been a low-born man, he could easily have freed himself. A man of his blood cannot descend to begin again, like him who has been early used to mean occupations."

"The hatred between the Berkeleys, and the Greys," observed the Vicar, "has been a sad misfortune to both."

"It has let in the common enemy upon them," answered Huntley, "thousands of times. The advantage of such an instrument was well known to these wretches; and has never been neglected by them. They have kept up the flame of discord with incessant assiduity and artifice.

"Unluckily the character of Sir Oliver wanted firmness. Perhaps the storms of his early life had given him an indecision,

which he could never conquer. A man broken by misfortunes is apt not to look beyond the expedients of the day: he lets things take their course, not having the energy to divert them into new channels. The extreme dissimilitude of his character to that of Sir Ambrose Grey, tended to nourish old feuds. I am afraid that the protector, to whom I owe so much, was most often in the wrong.

" There was, in most cases, as you well know, a marked and extraordinary diversity between the manners, and intellectual as well as moral habits, of the Berkeleys and the Greys. The Berkeleys had been more of courtiers: the Greys were of a rougher mould. Both had always been thoughtless in expence; each in their own way. The rural establishment of the Greys, adapted to country magnificence, country influence, and country sports, had always been on far the largest scale. Indeed their rank being higher, and having a seat in the

House of Lords, and their rental greater, as you know; this was a sort of superiority, which the other could not attempt to vie with, even if they had had the inclination."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed the Vicar, "What changes the rolling tide of time brings with it! I can look back forty years upon these two great families, and then in how different a state do I remember them! Wolstenholme blazed and roared with company and hospitality. The gallant brothers of the Greys were in the full vigour of their manhood, the world seemed at their grasp, and all the joys of life within their embrace: there was stock enough for a long series of gallant successors; and the glory of the house seemed as if at its meridian. At the same time the Court smiled on Sir Oliver Berkeley: he was then reckoned the finest gentleman of his day; the Queen noticed and flattered him; the ladies of the Court were all in love with him."

"The change overwhelms me with despondence," said Huntley: "I have a desire to know the state of Hardingville which I cannot repress: and yet if I should see the oppressor and the extortioner tearing to pieces those venerable domains, I doubt if I could endure the pangs of indignation and sorrow the sight would cause."

"Had you not better pay a visit of inquiry at Wolstenholme in preference, Huntley?"

"I will go to Wolstenholme: it was my intention; but I cannot resist passing by the way of Hardingville."

"Hasten then! lose not another day! strong rumours are afloat that the Baron of Wolstenholme declines fast!"

The next morning, Huntley set off. He reached a small inn, not far removed from one of the park-gates of Hardingville; and resolved to sleep there. He took an evening stroll through some of the outskirts of the park; but all was gloom and suspicion. The park-keepers

watched him; but did not approach very near to him. The very deer, and other herds seemed to partake of the melancholy. They came up slowly, and gazed; and then as slowly retired again. The wind shrieked mournfully along the coverts, and cross the glades: the cottage children looked ragged and pale; and the sound of the bell of the little parish church, which stood close to the hall, seemed to have a double sort of dolefulness.

Huntley passed a miserable night. All his reflections were bitter; and expelled sleep from his eyes. Before he quitted the place, he resolved to visit the church, to pay his last respects to the grave of Sir Oliver. He rose early; and found the clerk at home, ready to open the church-door to him. The church was hung with black; the last decorations of pennons and banners were not neglected. All was rich with the blazoned symbols of chivalry. "Alas! how unavailing," thought

Huntley, "thus to deck the cold insensate grave of him who has been suffered to die of a broken heart!"

He approached the spot, under which the clerk told him, that the earthly remains of Sir Oliver lay. He knelt; a flood of tears descended his face: "My heart is cold," he whispered to himself, "with the thought of what is the lot of poor humanity! is this what we struggle for? is this what we come to? O why! thus vex ourselves for the short space of good or evil, that is here? All is alike in the tomb: a life of prosperity and glory could have but come to this! A voice from below seems to whisper to me, 'in still small accents,' 'fret not thyself with worldly desires: thou soon shalt be at peace in the dust, as I am.'"

Huntley would have wished, at this moment, to have had some confidential person to whom he might unburden his feelings. Poor Susan Pembury had been long since removed from this scene of

sufferings to a distant residence, where the association of former ideas might not be so painfully renewed. Huntley had procured for her from the Grey family a competent and even liberal provision, which secured her independence, and the free indulgence of her own melancholy.

All was still; the dawn of day was yet scarcely passed: now and then the tread of a peasant passing the church-yard to his work, only served to make the silence more impressive; unless the discordant note of the fragment of a song of one of these thoughtless labourers broke the sacred solemnity.

All at once Huntley heard notes of a far different kind. It was the chant of a tender tremulous female voice. He listened, and caught the following dirge:

Where the cypress o'er the tomb
Hangs its melancholy boughs,
There I love to wait my doom;
There I love to breathe my vows.

Spirits, rising from the dust,
Take me to your blest repose!
There alone I put my trust;
There alone can end my woes.

Shade of him, whose noble race
Have for ages nurtured mine!
Near thee give a little space,
And my bones shall mix with thine!

Till arrives that happy hour,
I will wet thy grave with tears!
Joy to me's a faded flower;
Death to me no more has fears!

"Ah, sir," cried the clerk, "that is poor Susan Pembury. She arrived here the day of the funeral; and she wept so during all the ceremony, that every heart ached for her. She is sadly altered, and a little beside herself, as they say. She scarcely notices any one, and hardly ever speaks. She spends all the day under the yew in the church-yard!"

Huntley started.

"Woes multiply upon me," said he to himself; "but I will go out and try to comfort the unhappy and amiable creature."

It required a few minutes to enable him to collect his fortitude sufficiently for the task. He then, with a trembling step, proceeded down the funereal aisle of the church.

As he came forth from the porch, a female figure in white was sitting on the bench under the yew. She seemed entirely absorbed in her own thoughts, and saw him not till he approached close to her. She then started, and gave a shrill and terrific shriek.

"Susan, my amiable Susan, do you not know me?" said Huntley.

She hid her face with her handkerchief, and trembled; and Huntley perceived the tears running down her cheeks.

"My memory is not very good," she said; "I have met with some sad misfortunes, and it is all hurry, hurry, in my ideas. Here a light, and there a light; and here a cloud, and there a cloud! It is gone! I thought a spirit had come to me! Oh! one from the

dead! You looked so like him; but it was a delusion. Blessings, blessings upon him! I behold him in the sky every day: he smiles upon me, but he comes not here! and yet he had a look like you! Ah! I know you now; you are Huntley!" And then she fell down on her knees, and with hands uplifted in fervid devotion, prayed heaven to shower its bounties upon him.

Huntley raised her from the ground, and endeavoured to soothe her. She was pale, and thin, and apparently in the last stage of a consumption. He found that she had slept at her father's lodge, and persuaded her to walk with him thither. She was very weak, and hung heavily on his arm; but though they moved slowly, little conversation passed. A little sister met them at the door, and then her mother came forth, and received them in tears. Huntley had a long conversation with her apart (for the father was gone out to his work), and learned all that had

lately occurred regarding poor Susan; and gave all the consolation and all the advice in his power.

"Ah! generous sir," cried the broken-hearted old woman, "all will avail as nothing; it will sure be soon over with her in this world!—but God's will be done!"

Huntley thought the same; he saw not an hope that she would be long alive; nor, in her present state of mind, was it even desirable.

He lived in sorrows and anxieties: this was a great affliction to him; but those which pressed him still more were in immediate operation.

He tore himself away from Susan; felt sick at soul from his visit to Hardingville, and returning hastily to the inn, mounted his horse, and proceeded for Wolstenholme.

He thought he saw his old friend Kate at a distance, and made an effort, by spurring his horse, to catch her up.

The person, whoever it was, had vanished into the coverts, long before he could reach her.

He was aware that he must allow her to go her own way; for Kate (or Sylvana, to use her properer name) would not be dictated to. He had no hope but in her voluntary exertions, and he had no reason to distrust them.

But the present moment was inexpressibly critical. Desirable as the discovery of the document to prove his legitimacy would be at any time, it was incalculably more desirable at the period when Lord Grey's death was expected every day. Great struggles would be made for the succession, and it might be difficult to dispossess those who were once in.

When he arrived at Wolstenholme, the domestics shook their heads, and said that they thought all would soon be over with their Lord.

CHAP. XVIII.

DEATH OF LORD GREY.

THE dismay, the dissensions, the intrigues, the suspicions, at work in the Castle of Wolstenholme, were now at their height. Margaret Grey alone suffered her grief to prevail without any mixture of interested cares. It had been lately ascertained that one sufficient branch of the estate would go to her, and she asked no more. With a rare magnanimity she had forgiven Huntley, and still entertained a friendship for him.

The great intriguer was *Reynold Grey*, whose right to the succession in any case was very doubtful, and whose relationship was, at best, distant. His grandfather had gone by the name of *Crampton, alias Grey*, a change of name which had never been yet satisfactorily accounted for.

But he and the two preceding generations had lived as dependants on Wolstenholme.

Lord Grey had had (besides Sir Ambrosè) three or four other brothers, who all died without issue, and two or three sisters well married. He had also two or three uncles, whose male issue had failed.

Other noble branches of the Greys existed in other parts of the kingdom; but most of them had separated from the main stock, as early as the reign of King Henry III. The present patent had been granted by King Henry VI. An older female barony had then gone to the heiress of an elder brother of the peer so created, *Lord Grey of the Wye.*

Every apartment into which Huntley now went, every step that he trod, raised a new train of sensations in him, many of them full of deep pangs, yet not unmixed with gleams of hope, and a sort of association with what was around him, that elated him in his own opinion.

He could have no doubt, that to him would of right belong all that he now ranged over. It was a proud dominion; yet more endeared to him by the familiarities of his early boyhood; but if he should fail in making good his claim, it would greatly aggravate the mortifying state of destitution and obscurity in which he would remain?

He took a ride to the *Little Park*; and thence to one of the *chases* beyond it. He sought some of the haunts which had been the scenes of a thousand interesting incidents in his boyhood. There was a change even in the cheerfulness of the face of the country, and of its inhabitants. Sounds and voices were wont to be alive in the air, the tread of horses, the echoes of bugles, and of the tongues of dogs, and the mellow far-heard hallo of huntsmen and keepers. All were now as if in a torpor.

Many wonted faces were missing; they had expatriated; or gone to their

graves — Poor *Hal of the Hall* was dead.

A few girls, who had remembered the person of Huntley, seemed to look at him with a mysterious interest, as the future Lord of Wolstenholme, and brought him wreaths of forest flowers.

"Now," said Huntley to himself, "what would I give to have back my boyhood, without a father, without a hope of inheritance, if I could see again the scenes of cheerfulness and joy that I have seen here? if I could see Sir Ambrose, and Lord Grey, and Giles Grey, and all their happy and vigorous retinue enlivening these woody recesses? O! how the gloomy change sinks my heart! The voice of Nature seems to sympathise with the sorrows of the castle!"

Huntley had prolonged this stroll for the greater part of the morning; he had been absent from the castle many hours. As he rose to a brow which commanded a glimpse of its towers, he turned back

to look upon them; his heart was full, and he sat still upon his horse absorbed in meditation. A gleam of light had shown the turrets distinctly; all at once a black cloud drove along the sky, and hung directly over the castle; a shriek, as in a gust of wind, crossed Huntley's ear; and then, in an instant, came deep upon the breeze the loud toll of the chapel bell. It struck upon Huntley's heart-strings, and ran with the coldness of death through all his limbs.

"My honoured uncle is gone, then!" said he to himself; "the venerable Lord Grey has breathed his last! That bell never tolls but at the death of the chief!"

He slowly turned the reins of his horse to the path that led to the castle, and proceeded with a bosom overloaded with a chaos of violent and conflicting feelings.

When he arrived at the gate it was unnecessary to ask questions. Every

thing indicated that the melancholy event had taken place. A hurry in some, a fixed stupor in others, long intervals of a frightful silence, and whispers, and shrugs, and mysterious tones, and a general change of voice into something hollow and fearful.

The remainder of that day seemed an eternity to Huntley; he thought that it would never come to an end. The next was little less tedious and painful; but the time was critical; all his energies were required; the third day he set out for Hellingsley, to consult with Sylvana, if she could be found.

He rode till fatigue of body and of mind rendered him scarce capable of speaking or of thinking. He reached Hellingsley, but the gates appeared still to be closed, and Sylvana still to be absent. He returned again half-distracted to Wolstenholme. The funeral was not yet over; two days afterwards he attended the mournful ceremony.

To prevent the officious intrusion of *Reynold Grey*, it was necessary to commit part of his secret to one of the chief managers of the house, in whom he could most confide. With this hint, the manager had sufficient influence with Margaret Grey, to enable him to make arrangements that would prevent the evil which he feared.

CHAP. XIX.

CLAIMS AND COUNTER CLAIMS.—KATE'S PEREGRINATIONS.

NOT many days elapsed after the funeral, when Huntley was advised publicly to avow himself the legitimate son of the late Sir Ambrose Grey, and to send a notice of his claim to the office of the secretary of state.

Reynold Grey, whose rage and disappointment exceeded all bounds, sent a counter-claim, in which he boldly asserted Huntley to be a bastard of Kate the gypsey, and that his reputed father was *Harry Ring-the-dale*, a well-known huntsman of Sir Ambrose.

Two factions immediately rose up in the house itself. Margaret endeavoured to hold the scales of justice even; but

her generous inclinations were all to Huntley. She herself had always thought him to be a son of Sir Ambrose, though she had supposed him to be an illegitimate son. The person to whom Huntley had intrusted himself, gave her reason to believe that he would be able to prove his mother's marriage.

The rumours soon spread all over the county; and equal parties were formed among the gentry and people. There were not a few who hoped that both would be crushed, and the honours would altogether fall to the ground.

It now became necessary for Huntley to lay the whole case before his early and best friend, the vicar of Cheveley; but with some little reserve as to some of the secrets imparted by Sylvana, which she had especially and imperiously charged him not to disclose till their development, on pain of withdrawing all her future services, without which success would be impossible.

Nor was Huntley less eager to wait on Mr. Barney, whose astonished ears the news had already reached. Language cannot describe the tender transports, with which he was received by Alice. That all this unexpected prosperity was not certain, could not repress her delight: even the chance of it to her was so utterly new, that it seemed super-human felicity.

"What if Kate the gypsey should turn out our great friend in this affair?" said Huntley.

"I had always a predilection for her," said Alice; "an impression that there was something mysterious, and perhaps magical, about her."

But Alice had also another suspicion which she did not like to hint to Huntley, that Kate was in truth his mother.

"She has been my guardian angel," exclaimed he, "and I am almost disposed to worship her."

"I have heard her voice upon the

air in the deep of night," cried Alice, "cheering my spirit in slumbers."

He told Alice, that she had been absent some time from Hellingsley, on business regarding his claims, and that he waited her return with almost insufferable impatience.

When he returned to the Vicarage, he found a pacquet from the secretary of state's office, acknowledging the receipt of his petition, expressing a little surprise at the unexpected nature of its contents, and alluding to the different name under which he had been hitherto known to the world; and calling upon him for abstracts of the proofs on which he meant to rely.

There was a tone in this, which gave him a great deal of pain. He saw that intrigue and prejudice had already been busy against him.

He thought that it must be too much to call upon him for Abstracts of Proofs, especially in the present stage when it

would probably be to be decided before some legal tribunal against a counter-claimant. He felt also, that, till he could again see Sylvana, he was ill provided in the way of legal testimony.

Sylvana returned not; but she was not the less industrious in his cause. She had taken her accustomed disguise of a gypsy, as best adapted to the enquiries she was engaged in making.

It was only in a very remote part of the county, that she could have any hope of obtaining the first traces of *Greene:* and these she could only expect from great management, caution, and ingenuity. She did obtain this clue; and it was to an obscure corner of another county, that joined it. All traces were at that point utterly lost for a long time. Greene had long disappeared thence; and there did not seem to be the smallest guess, what had become of him.

At the last cottage he had inhabited,

Kate anxiously asked if they retained the smallest fragment of a relic of him.

"Only an old prayer-book," said the cottager's wife.

"Let me look at it!" cried Kate. A few sentences were written in it, in the hand that Kate recognized. Kate decyphered every letter with great care. At length she made out the following in red ink, intermixed with other scribblings:

"East to west, and west to east,
K. will sometimes know is best."

She had no doubt that it was intended as a direction to her, in case she should trace him to this spot. It alluded to an old joke between them, and Kate affixed a meaning to it which would have been lost upon any one else. She now turned her footsteps, and travelled in the opposite direction.

There were some pecularities in the person, and also in the expressions and

habits of Greene, which easily marked him out to an attentive observer. Though high-born, he was fond of low company; and enjoyed beyond any man ale-house hilarity. He had the talent of keeping the vulgar in a roar; and thus opened to himself the best place in many an host's fireside for days together when he had little to pay. He had the faculty of composing lively songs, which he sung with an humour all his own.

Kate in her travels had no difficulty in finding entrance into these sorts of houses, by the road side. She herself could be as entertaining as Greene; and her character of a fortune-teller gave her still more influence.

She found no difficulty in laying traps for tracing Greene without raising suspicion. She was astonished at her own success in this way. Scarce a day passed, in which she did not meet in these haunts, with some recognition of him.

At length all trace ended. She had

passed a journey of four days, and not less than eighty or ninety miles, (for she could easily walk twenty miles a day,) when she stopped at a village, more from despair, than fatigue. She had almost ceased to ask questions, or exert her old clues, when something struck her in the conversation of some of the peasants, who were drinking over the fire.

"Why, that is just as our old curate used to say," exclaimed one of them: "the old fellow with his cock-eye, always used just *they there words!*" "Ah, and a merry soul, he was," answered another, "God help him; he has drank up his drink!" "Ah, the poor parson," said a third, "a merry fellow, and a rare one he had been in his time, if he had had where-withal to support it! "Od's pity!" they all accorded; "*Parson Barker*, *Parson Barker;* we never shall look upon his like again, for fun and a pot of ale."

Kate seized upon this conversation. "Why it was an oath, man, you gave

us as Parson Barker's. Do parsons swear, then?" "Ah, like troopers, sometimes, good woman; you know that as well as we do." "An odd sort of an oath, too, this parson Barker's. I never heard, exactly such an one before." "The old fellow dealt in odd ones," they answered. "He was an odd fish all over. Sea-talk and land-talk, parson and sailor, and soldier and sportsman, all one to him; and then he liked the company of such bodies as we be, as well as that of the highest lord of the land; and so he lived and died a curate."

"What! he served your church here, for a starving salary, while the fat Rector spent the tythes in his elbow chair, in a distant parish." "Ah, so he did, cunning one; for a little time only, though. Nobody knew where he came from; but that he came ragged, and was had cheap. A power of stories they told about him, but he made a jest of them all. It is not many months that he has

been dead. The turf is fresh upon his grave."

Kate heard this with a mixture of agitation, eagerness, sorrow, and satisfaction. It was a clue from which she had much to hope. But her self-command enabled her to conceal her feelings. She learned without much difficulty, the names of those with whom the curate was most intimate; and the next morning set out in search of them.

Her first visit was to the Rectory-house, in which she understood the curate had died. In the character of a gypsy, she did not find a very easy access there. The curate had been succeeded by a starch young puritan, who held it impious to hold communion with those who had intercourse with the devil, as he believed all gypsies and fortune-tellers to have. Luckily he had a country wench for his servant, who could not resist the gypsy's offers to give her the characters of her lovers.

She learned much from this girl of her master's predecessor in the cure; for the girl was the daughter of a neighbouring cottager, who had known the old curate well. She said that every body loved him, except such 'sawney, canting fellows as her present master; but that they blamed a good deal the looseness of his manners. The bishop had wrote more than once about him, and threatened to turn him out, and that it was even rumoured that he was not really in holy orders. But the Rector was a friend of the Bishop, and had great influence with him; and as he got the curate on better terms than he could get another, prevailed on his being permitted to remain.

Kate prevailed on the girl to procure her a sight of the parish-register. The hand-writing in which the entries were made during the late curate's time, left her no reason to doubt that she had discovered in him her long-sought RICHARD

GREENE. But what would this avail, unless he had left behind him the documents, on which all the prospects of Huntley depended.

CHAP. XX.

THE CURATE, BARKER.

A FARMER of the parish had been the kindest, and best friend of the curate. Kate proceeded to his house with a beating heart, and trembling steps. He was not at home, but his wife was; and Kate soon ingratiated herself into her notice.

By degrees she led the conversation to the curate. The good woman launched out in his praises, and said, that he was the wittiest man, and the best company she had ever known. "He knew all the world, and had '*such a power of stories to tell*,' that a winter's night and a summer's day could never tire of them. But how he could ever become a parson

she could not tell. To be sure, he was not much fit for a parson!" He came here, she said, to her good man's house, cold and hungry, and sick: he took him first into his barn: the next day he told such a pitious tale of his distresses, and shewed himself so much of a gentleman in his language, that her husband removed him into a bed of his house. In a fortnight he had greatly recovered. They went to church: the congregation waited for the clergyman an hour past the time. There was a marriage and a funeral to take place. Great impatience and dissatisfaction was expressed. Of a sudden, and as if by a momentary impulse, "I will read the service," said our guest; "how do you know but that I am a clergyman?" He mounted the desk; the clerk had the surplice ready. He read the prayers with a beautiful voice, and with the air of a man of rank. When he ascended the pulpit, the whole congregation were full of cu-

riosity; all was still; a pin might have been heard to drop. He had no written sermon for such an unexpected occasion. He was ready with an apt text, and he kept us all in astonishment and admiration for above half an hour, by a discourse full of striking passages; and though unequal, and sometimes too familiar, yet, if it sometimes made us smile, oftener made us tremble

The cause of the absence of the minister, whose place he had supplied, soon came out. He had been struck suddenly with an apoplexy, while mounting his horse to return, after doing duty at another church, and died on the spot. The parish sent a petition to the rector to appoint Mr. Barker in his place. After a little discussion of the terms, it was successful.

"Have you discovered whence Mr. Barker came, or who were his relations?" said Kate.

"Never," said the woman. "My

husband was at the expence of his funeral;" and then Kate thought that the woman's tone altered, and that she looked more reserved. Kate did not suspect that he had any property to leave behind him, and therefore could not guess that there could be any thing in this question which could offend.

"I have travelled the world from an infant," said Kate, "and many's the strange character that I have known. I think I once met with one that a little answers your description of the curate."

"You cunning ones, I suppose, know every body," said the woman a little sharply.

It was not Kate's part to show ill-humour; she bore this taunt patiently.

"He did not die worth a shilling," went on the hostess: "he had obtained half a quarter's salary in advance from the rector, but at a swinging deduction, by way of interest, to be sure. All my master got for it was a few sealed-up scribbles,

only fit to light the fire, if my good man was not too scrupulous as to a few words the poor curate said to him about them on his death-bed. They do nothing but lumber up a drawer I could put to better use. But here comes my husband: do not mention that I have said a word to you about these papers."

"Aha!" cried the farmer, laughing, "what, is my old wife getting her fortune told? What, would you have a second, good dame; have you not had enough of one?"

"John Jenkins," said his wife, "you are witty this morning. Have you been taking a cup with neighbour Marks? Not with the new curate, I am sure!"

"No, no; since poor Barker died, no more cups with curates for me; that's certain, old Jenny."

"Why so old, John? These are new jokes about age. You know that I am ten years short of you!"

"Come, come, don't be angry; this

cunning woman will know all your thoughts. Let us drink to peace and unity. Bring a tankard of your best ale, Jane, and the wise woman, no doubt, will pledge us."

"A generous heart and a ready hand are the crown of the world!" exclaimed Kate.

"Well said, Kate! I have always stroven to be generous to the best of my power!"

"So it seems, Mr. Jenkins; you bear an excellent character, and you will be rewarded for it."

"It was but a few months since," said he, "that I buried the poor curate at my own cost; and the stingy old rector has refused to contribute a farthing towards my reimbursement."

"But the curate was an excellent creature," said the wife.

"So he was: and I wonder how the devil he became so poor; for he had had an excellent education, and was as sharp

as a needle, and knew more of the world than all the other men put together that I have ever seen; but all his wisdom ended in a jest, and all his joy in a tankard of ale!

"It ended with him in a trice at last. He was ill but three days; and it was only within the last twelve hours that he suspected he was dying. He sent for me ——"

A colour rose in Kate's face, and an eager look which she could not suppress. It did not escape the notice of Jenkins.

"Why do you flush so?" cried he; "why do you seem to concern yourself so much about the story of this poor man?"

"I told you, that I suspect I once knew a person like him, of whom I have lost sight for many years!"

"You deal in magic," said he; and then he pronounced a word of a strange

sound. Kate started, but made no reply. He paused, and took a memorandum-book out of his pocket, opened it, and seemed eagerly to be examining some written note. He then repeated a word of a sound materially different from it. Kate instantly replied, with a distinct articulation of three words, equally strange.

"It is true, or she is a witch!" exclaimed Jenkins; and then took a pencil from his book, tore out a leaf, and wrote on it four hieroglyphic marks. "Look at that," said he.

She looked; she borrowed the pencil, and wrote four other marks below them.

Jenkins hastily seized the paper; he compared it with some marks in his book. "They are yours," said he, in agitation.

"The curate's papers are yours!"

His wife turned pale, and then red.

"We are bewitched all over!" she cried. "I am afraid to sit in a room with this woman. John, do not leave me!"

"I must fetch the papers," said he, "or I shall never sleep another wink!" and he rushed out of the room before his wife could stop him.

He came back in a few minutes, with a small case of papers sealed up.

"This case," he said, "the curate committed to me, with the most solemn injunctions on his death-bed; and told me never to deliver it, unless to one who could distinctly answer to the signs to which you have so unequivocally given the requisite responses. I was prepared for this. I dreamed last night that this day they would be demanded of me!"

Kate received the precious offering in an agony of rapture. She folded it to her bosom; she fell on her knees; and wept upon it.

"May Heaven reward you for ever and ever!" cried she to Jenkins. "This is the treasure of which I have long been in search. For this I have travelled east and west, north and south!"

CHAP. XXI.

THE CURATE'S WILL. — DISCOVERIES. — PROOFS OF CLAIM PROPOSED.

Kate's impatience was such, that she intreated a room to herself to examine the papers.

The Curate's Will.

" I, *H. Barker* alias *Bourchier*, an unworthy minister of God's word, who for many years threw off the holy gown, to which I had from corrupt earthly motives devoted myself, and gave myself up to all manner of riot, debauchery, and vice, now in my last hours of earthly suffering, too late repentant of my sins, feel myself under the necessity, in obedience to the solemn promise given to others, to afford a clue to my real name and family, which, in

fear of disgrace and punishment, I have concealed from an early age of unhappy and unpardonable crime. I hope I do all that is required of me, when I make this general acknowledgment. A more particular relation would be too painful to me; and more hurtful than instructive to the world.

"I have no worldly goods to leave, and it is more for the purpose of thus solemnly, in the last act of my life, signing this real name, in addition to that which I have assumed, than for any other reason, that I now, with a trembling but faithful hand, subscribe this paper.

"HUMPHREY BARKER,
"*alias* BOURCHIER."

In this will was inclosed the following certificate:

"*I, Humphrey Bourchier, Clerk, hereby certify that on the* 17*th day of Nov.* 160.. *I performed the marriage ceremony, in the private chapel belonging to*

Hellingsley Hall, according to the due forms of the church of England, between Sir Ambrose Grey, Knt. and Elfred Berkeley, daughter of Sir Oliver Berkeley the elder, Knt.

" And I further certify that

" *The person who was brought up in the house of Sir Ambrose Grey, under the name of Henry Huntley, was the legitimate issue of the said marriage.*

" H. Bourchier."

Kate took leave of Jenkins and his wife with a profusion of expressions of gratitude, and bent her way as rapidly as she could, back to Hellingsley.

When she arrived there, the agitation of her mind and the fatigues of her journies had been such, that she was instantly siezed with a fever, which detained her four days in bed, almost insensible. On the fifth day, she dispatched a messenger to the Vicarage for Huntley. He

came, and found her yet alarmingly ill. Having prepared him for what she had to communicate, she put the papers into his hands. No anticipated intelligence of them could enable him to read them without the deepest emotion.

He now thought himself tolerably secure of the succession; but he had enough knowlege of the world, to foresee that the parties he had to deal with would make every possible objection to these documents.

He wrote an answer to the Secretary of State, declaring that he was prepared with a certificate of his mother's marriage to Sir Ambrose Grey, from the clergyman who performed the ceremony; and stated farther, that his mother was a sister of the late Sir Oliver Berkeley.

This news no sooner reached its destination, than it spread through the Court with the rapidity of lightning; and busied the conjectures, and employed

the fancies of all the idle people about it, for a whole week without cessation.

Many said that it was an entire fabrication, and an attempt upon the credulity of the intelligent, of which the impudence was only equalled by the absurdity. Others assured their hearers, that they knew intimately the sisters of Sir Oliver Berkeley; and that no one of them could by possibility have been married to Sir Ambrose Grey.

The general leaning was against the truth of the pretension, and the Lord Chancellor was advised to refuse issuing the writ of summons, without a solemn and rigid inquiry.

Meantime Huntley was employed in the task, delightful, though crossed by many painful circumstances, of communicating all the particulars to Alice Berkeley.

" Now, my Harry," said she, (" for I will no longer call you Huntley,) remember how right I was in the exact

resemblance which I found between our grandfather, Sir Oliver, and you."

"There was reason for the likeness, undoubtedly," said Harry; "but I could not tell you so at that time."

Alice, more sanguine than Huntley, did not think it possible, that he could now be defeated of his claims. Her aunt, *Elfred*, had, from Alice's birth, been obliterated from the family conversation; but she recollected many little circumstances on that subject, which she could now for the first time explain.

Meanwhile Harry had not a moment to lose in urging his pretensions. The other party were busy, and they had a powerful faction to back them.

The King referred the case to three or four ministers of state, whom he named commissioners for the purpose: for at that time, a committee of privileges of the Lords, was a jurisdiction, or tribunal, which had not come into usage.

A case was drawn up by eminent

lawyers, who were prepared to argue this question with singular ability. It was necessary to establish Bourchier's identity; that he had duly been admitted into holy orders; that no regular act had taken place to degrade him from those orders; that the ceremony of marriage had been prior to Huntley's birth; that the certificate was of the true hand-writing and subscription of Bourchier, &c. &c.

Upon all these things there might be a great deal of cavil, when the parties were so disposed. At any rate, it would unfold a dreadful scene of wickedness in Sir Ambrose, and the Hall of Hellingsley. Kate was the only living witness; and though she could give full testimony of every thing, yet the lawyers foresaw that violent attacks would be made on her credibility.

The grounds on which REYNOLD GREY meant to support his claim, were yet withheld from Harry and his agents.

Indeed, this counter-claim, being set up on a more remote descent, could not be entered upon till Harry's was disposed of.

Agents were very active in this opposition; and Kate, who had all her eyes and ears awake, and whose shrewdness seldom erred, tracked them round Hellingsley, attempting to tamper with witnesses, and bring evidence that Harry was not the child of Elfred Berkeley, but suppositious.

Week passed after week in this painful suspence; and Harry's uneasiness, after his hopes had been so raised, became almost intolerable. There was something irritating and degrading in this low kind of contest with the petty passions of corrupt men. Harry was better prepared to struggle with great adversities where fortitude was magnanimous, and indignation effective. Here all that was manly only led him into the enemy's net.

Alice began also to suffer deeply. The first excess of joy was succeeded by a low

and comfortless fever, which made her see nothing but darkness and disappointment in the future; and embittered the expected failure of all her hopes by the previous transport of momentary certainty.

CHAP. XXII.

HEARING OF THE CLAIM.

THE commissioners at length appointed a day for hearing the claim.

On that day the whole case was opened: and the proofs were commenced. It was then adjourned for a week: and in the meantime the opponents were busy in every quarter. The Attorney-general attended on the part of the Crown; as well as counsel on the part of *Reynold Grey*. Every objection was made by both these parties, that subtlety or malice could suggest.

Kate was the first object for their arrows; but her spirit, her clearness, her quickness of retort, were such, that

she first kept them at bay; then daunted; and at last, triumphed over them.

When they found the cause going in Harry's favour, they made a pretence to get another adjournment for a month, that they might set to work again in new channels.

Harry's soul was harassed with this. He could not have supposed so much unprovoked bitterness to have generally prevailed in the human bosom. His pride was insulted; his self-complacence was outraged. All that was unfortunate in his story; all that was unhappy in the conduct of Sir Ambrose; all that could mortify and debase, were the delight of every tongue: and what was unhappy in itself, was made ten times more black by wicked and wilful invention.

It was in this way, by long and cruel adjournments that the case was protracted for more than a year: (*for this mode of opposition had not yet got the length of* FOURTEEN YEARS, *as it did in a case, which*

closed in the present century.) At length it seemed to be drawing to an end. The Attorney-General was heard, and made a violent speech; the counsel for Reynold Grey made one still more violent. Harry's counsel replied in a powerful and eloquent manner: the counsel for the Crown claimed the privilege (never used,) of a counter-reply, that they might have the advantage of the last words. For some reason unknown to Harry, they made a personal question of it, as if all their own private passions were involved in it.

The commissioners did not deliver their judgment in open court; but said, that they would communicate their award in writing to the Crown.

A month passed, and nothing was heard of the result. A thousand rumours were afloat, sufficient to agitate the steadiest mind.

At length, when Harry began to despair, a packet arrived with all the for-

malities of the Secretary of State's seal. For many minutes he had not the courage to open it. With a trembling hand he at last broke the staring wax. The envelope contained two or three papers, among which was a copy of the award. His eyes grew misty, and refused to distinguish the forms of the letters.

His impatience however could not long be restrained. The mist of his eyes lessened. He turned them on the first paper, which contained the award. It commenced with a long and tedious procemium couched in quaint technicalities.

He could scarcely believe his sight, when he at length came to the conclusion, that "*Henry Huntley, alias Grey, had proved himself to be the legitimate son and heir of the late Sir Ambrose Grey, deceased: and as such, entitled to the barony of Grey of Wye, and the estates annexed to the honour.*"

Manly and vigorous as his heart was, he fainted with joy. As soon as he had recovered, and put the papers into the hands of the vicar, he took his horse, and rode to the rectory, to communicate to Alice the delightful intelligence.

He found Mr. Barney alone in the parlour; and related the matter shortly. Mr. Barney intreated him to refrain from too sudden a communication to Alice, in her present very weak state: and rather to trust to him the mode and time of it.

Reluctantly, therefore, Harry, *now Lord Grey*, departed without seeing Alice. He directed his course to Hellingsley, to congratulate with Sylvana, in whom he found that noble mind which had displayed itself in all her conduct towards him.

He poured forth his gratitude and his devotion; he lavished every promise of reward.

"Be silent on those points, my gallant

peer," said she, " I have the reward here;" and she put her hand upon her heart. " I have redeemed my faults. I have passed my life in an house of wickedness, to do good; and I am glorious in my own eyes! Elfrida Berkeley, look down upon me from Heaven, and say, if I have not done my duty." The tears streamed from her eyes; and she sat for many minutes, convulsed with her emotions.

CHAP. XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

Lord Grey took his seat in the House of Lords, obtained possession of his estates, and within a month, was married to Alice Berkeley.

They lived many years in great splendour, virtue, esteem, and happiness, till the breaking out of the civil wars; when Lord Grey took an active part on the royalist side. He suffered much, as the king's affairs declined; his estates were sequestered; his Castle of Wolstenholme was besieged, taken, and burnt; and his eldest son fell, covered with glory, at the battle of Newbury.

His old opponent, Reynold Grey, had died unmarried.

He had one remaining son, in whom all the hope of the continuance of the honour in his immediate posterity was placed. Having struggled so hard himself for the preservation of the name and honours, he grew more anxious about it, than perhaps men of cold temperaments will think wise.

His son was not much inclined to marry in those days of discord, and danger, and privation. There existed only remote branches of the male line of the family; all long separated from intercourse with Wolstenholme; and at this crisis, either exiled from the kingdom, or fallen into obscurity.

Distracted by cares about his property, and grief for the son whom he had lost, he had few thoughts to spare for remote relations. But a dream was always haunting him. The visions of futurity continually disturbed his rest. He saw his race go down for some generations;

then, when it seemed in its highest glory, fail at once.

A cloud came over, and instantly the light sprung from another quarter; and the ray of the name made a struggle to go on again; and witches sprung up and rode in the air, and pronounced their accursed incantations, and huddled up the ray again in fogs and tempests. Then a voice was heard, as of one in a tone of eloquent sadness, mingled with deeper notes of proud indignation, crying, "Avaunt, ye fiends! ye cannot extinguish the fire, by all that your cauldrons of poison can pour upon it." But the hags redoubled their workings, and the ray was obscured, and the voice was drowned in the troubled air.

Then a stream, lashed by the winds, rushed across him, and the voice rode upon it; and a human form appeared, as if buffeting with the waves; and a sound was heard to proceed, as it were, from

the lips of this figure; and it said, "Be comforted; the magnanimous shall not sink: the name and honours of GREY shall yet survive the storm!"

It was the fever that preceded dissolution. In a few days, Lord Grey closed his eyes in death, on 30th Nov. 1654.

THE END.

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